



1949

# The Personal Relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift as Revealed by Their Mutual Correspondence

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## Recommended Citation

Abel, John F., "The Personal Relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift as Revealed by Their Mutual Correspondence" (1949). *Master's Theses*. Paper 731.  
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THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF ALEXANDER POPE AND  
JONATHAN SWIFT AS REVEALED BY THEIR  
MUTUAL CORRESPONDENCE

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By  
John F. Abel

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A Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Loyola University

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June 1949

## LIFE

This thesis was written by Mr. John F. Abel, who was born on June 24, 1927, in Dayton, Ohio. He was graduated from Loyola Academy, of Chicago, Illinois, in June, 1944. After two years in training in the United States Merchant Marine Cadet Corps, he returned to Loyola University, and received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in February, 1949.

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND AND PROBLEMS

This is a study of letters, the letters of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. During a separation of more than twenty-seven years these two important literary figures maintained a correspondence which is the only manifestation we have of their personal relationship. These letters, as all friendly letters, reveal the personality and character of the men who wrote them in a much clearer fashion than their other published works. In addition, they show us each man as he was seen by the other, his most famous contemporary.

The personal likes and dislikes they shared, the reconciliation of their differences in religion, politics, and philosophy, their professed misanthropy, and position as writers, all these will come within the scope of our examination. We shall examine these letters in detail in an effort to understand and define the nature and extent of the personal relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift.

The study, however, is fraught with complications and difficulties because of the mystery which shrouds the publication of this particular correspondence, and because of the misunderstandings which have clouded the figures of Swift and Pope since their time. These problems must be solved before an examination of the letters may begin.

Further, such a study should begin with a complete understanding of what a letter is before any attempt to use them is made. Accordingly, this chapter will be devoted, first, to the necessary background of the history of letter-writing, a definition of the type of letter with which we shall be concerned, and the place of the particular letters under consideration, the Swift-Pope correspondence, within this framework. Second, we shall examine the problems presented by the investigation itself.

The best place to begin is in the beginning, but, unfortunately, the works of Hellanicus, the ancient Greek logographer, are lost. We must begin, then, with Tatian and Clement of Alexandria who refer to him as their authority for accrediting Atossa, the mother of Xerxes and daughter of Cyrus, with the invention of letters, that is, of epistolary correspondence.<sup>1</sup> However, this is undoubtedly apocryphal, and we do not know, with certainty, who did invent the letter.<sup>2</sup> The ancient Greeks did not write familiar letters and we have no examples of the genre until the time of Cicero.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Roberts, History of Letter-Writing from the Earliest Period to the Fifth Century (London: W. Pickering, 1843), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> George Saintsbury, A Letter Book (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1922), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, op. cit., p. 8.

The father of letter-writing was Cicero, and he had two styles. There is the formal style of the Epistle to his brother Quintus, which is what we ordinarily mean by Ciceronian. There is the familiar style of the Letters to Atticus and to various other friends, from which all formality has disappeared. They are, I suppose, by common consent, the best letters in the world. Whether grave or gay, whether lively or severe, they reflect the changing moods of a versatile, ingenious, sensitive, subtle, and cultivated mind.<sup>4</sup>

The Romans excelled the Greeks in this branch of literature whether Cicero be given the title of Father of Letter-Writing or not. For, the letters of Cicero, Pliny, and Seneca in antiquity, and of Sidonius Apollinaris or Cassiodorus later, have no equal in Greek.<sup>5</sup>

There would seem to be some connection between the spread of Christianity and the rise of letter-writing. A considerable part of the New Testament consists of Epistles, and although we do not have very many letters from the time of the Fathers to the Middle Ages, it must be remembered that the period was one which produced little formal literature of any kind. However, one of the most famous of all correspondences, that of Heloise and Abelard, was produced at the end of that period.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest collection of private correspondence in

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4 H. W. Paul, Men and Letters ( London: John Lane, 1901 ), p. 188.

5 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 11.

6 Ibid., p. 13.

England is the Paston Letters, 1422-1509. They are wholly lacking in literary excellence, and are completely different from the initial Greek rhetorical letter. These were followed by a large bulk of letters of all kinds, beginning with Ascham, who wrote first in Latin and later in English, and continuing through the reign of Elizabeth. For the most part these letters show the influence of the formal rules and complete letter-writers developed on the continent during the Renaissance. Indeed, these complete letter-writers were still in favor in England at the time of the accession of James I, although they were not so diligently studied.<sup>9</sup>

There followed a rising popularity of letter-writing for which various reasons have been advanced. Among those which played a part in this development of the letter were practical reasons, psychological reasons,<sup>10</sup> an increased interest in the study of language and the art of expression in the latter half of the sixteenth century,<sup>11</sup> the development

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7 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 15.

8 Ibid., p. 16.

9 Maude B. Hansche, "The Formative Period of English Familiar Letter- Writers and Their Contribution to the English Essay," "Essays on English Literature" ( University of Pennsylvania, 1902), p. 28.

10 Lyn Li Irvine, Ten Letter Writers ( London: L. and Virginia Woolf, 1932), p. 9.

11 Hansche, op. cit., p. 8.



of the vernacular language,<sup>12</sup> and the rise of trade. Further, "England followed Italy and Europe in every literary form, and the form most utilized in prose, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was that of the letter."<sup>13</sup> Whatever the causes, the real letter was yet to appear.

But in an even greater degree than its successor (v. inf.) [sic] this corpus [Elizabethan letters] would expose itself to the criticism that the time for perfect letter-writing was not quite yet, in this day of so much that was perfect, that the style was not quite the right style, the knack not yet quite achieved.<sup>14</sup>

During the early part of the seventeenth century Latin still exercised a strong influence on the language used in letters, and it was not until the time of Dryden that the language itself became "supple and docile enough"<sup>15</sup> for the purposes of the letter-writer. The letters of the second half of the seventeenth century, however, are too "proper" and too "dull"<sup>16</sup> to be real letters. Something was still lacking, although Johnson feels that "it is in Pepys, and even in the slightly previous Evelyn, that we meet the first genuine English letter."<sup>17</sup>

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12 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 19.

13 Hansche, op. cit., p. 8.

14 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 18.

15 Ibid., p. 19.

16 Loc. cit.

17 Reginald B. Johnson, English Letter Writers (London: G. Howe, 1927), Introduction, p. ix.

At any rate, real letter-writing did not begin much before the close of the seventeenth century, and, most probably, it did not reach its full development until the early part of the eighteenth century.

The age of letter-writing may be said to have opened with the birth of Mme. de Sévigné and closed with the death of Merimée. No century has been better adapted to letter-writing than the eighteenth and none has produced more good letter-writers.<sup>18</sup>

Implicit in this discussion is some definition of a good and great letter. What is a letter? It is not a formal, rhetorical, literary document. Official governmental and business communications, although they are generally called "letters", do not come properly under this genus. A letter, strictly speaking, a familiar letter, is "the closest to conversation of literary forms that do not actually reproduce conversation itself, it remains apart from conversation subject to an additional degree of discipline."<sup>19</sup> The first aim of the true letter-writer must be self-revelation;<sup>20</sup> the letter itself must be spontaneous, clear, informal, careless in appearance, and

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<sup>18</sup> Irvine, op. cit., p. 8.

Cf. Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 21: "By common consent of all opinions worth attention, that century [the eighteenth] was, in the two European literatures which were equally free from crudity and decadence -- France and England, the very palmiest days of the art [of letter-writing.]"

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> William J. Dawson, The Great English Letter-Writers (New York, F. H. Revell Co. 1908), p. 9.

artistic in arrangement.<sup>21</sup> It should not be overly intellectual, for its purpose is to amuse and give pleasure to the reader, to maintain friendship between separated friends, and "to excite sympathy and interest."<sup>22</sup>

The fact would seem to be that the art of letter-writing is a sort of mosaic or macédoine of nearly all the departments of the general Art of Literature. You want constant touches of the art of narrative, and not very seldom some of the art dramatic. Always you want that of conversation -- subtly differentiated. Occasionally, though in the ordinary letter not very often, you want argument: much oftener description. Pathos, tenderness, etc., are more exceptionally required: and it is, in modern times at least, generally accepted that in the letter consolatory, that almost greatest of Shakespearian magic phrases, 'the rest is silence', should never be forgotten and very quickly applied. Wit is welcome if it be well managed . . . Perhaps the greatest negative caution of all is that the letter should not obviously [*italics in original*] written for publication.<sup>23</sup>

As the letter itself reached its highest form in the eighteenth century, the importance of letters in literary studies, particularly in biography, was also recognized at this time. Mason's edition of the Works of Gray in 1775 included a biography in which parts of the poet's letters and journals had been incorporated, but it remained for Boswell to develop the use of letters in literary studies to its height. He understood exactly how they should be used, and outlined his attitude in a letter to Temple, which Dunn cites:

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21 Paul, op. cit., p. 189.

22 Paul, op. cit., p. 183.

23 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 35.

Indeed I cannot conceive a more perfect method of writing any man's life, than not only relating all the facts of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought . . . I venture to say that he [Johnson] will be seen in this work [The Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson] more completely than any man who has ever yet lived . . . And he will be seen as he really was, for I propose to write, not his panegyric, but his life. <sup>24</sup>

Boswell's work convinced the world. His "method" has been adopted in all biography since his time. Indeed, it has been expanded. Letters are not studied solely to reveal personal characteristics hidden in the published work of a man, but they are utilized to show his controlling ideas in literature, politics, religion, and every phase of life. It is felt that his private, familiar letters show us the man "as he really was." It is no longer possible to make a valid estimation of a man or of his work without reference to his personal correspondence.

There are many biographies of both Swift and Pope available. Sir Henry Craik's The Life of Jonathan Swift, the standard biography in two volumes, has been improved upon by shorter works like Mr. Stephen L. Gwynn's The Life and Friendships of Jonathan Swift, Ricardo Quintana's The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, and R. W. Jackson's Swift and His Circle or Jonathan Swift, Dean and Pastor, to mention only a few. The situation is much the same with Pope. Courthope's Life in

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<sup>24</sup> Walter H. Dunn, English Biography (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1916), pp 114-16.

the Works has been augmented by George Sherburn's The Early Career of Alexander Pope, and Russell K. Root's The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope. But biographies are, in general, as Dryden says, "the history of particular men's lives."

They concentrate on revealing the life of their subject, on presenting him as he was, but they cannot cover all his relations. They utilize all the material that they can find to reveal the entire life of a man so that he and his work may be understood and appreciated.

The biographies and studies of Swift and Pope are no different. Their respective personalities have been subjected to rigorous study, but only the broad outlines of their relation to each other have been traced. The biographers mention that these two men were close friends, they emphasize their close literary connection, and the similarity of their attitudes toward poetry and life, but they do so in a passing fashion, for they have a whole life to reveal. They utilize some of the letters of these two men to fit in with their purpose of portraying a single personality. However, no study of these letters, as letters, is available. Nor is there any definitive statement of their personal relationship. That is the object of this thesis.

Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift were separated, one in England and the other in Ireland, during the greater part of their friendship. The extant letters of their correspondence

cover a period extending from December 8, 1713 to March 22, 1741, a total of twenty-seven years and three months. In no other place is their personal relationship more clearly manifested than in these letters. A complete and exhaustive examination and analysis of this material is absolutely necessary for an understanding of these two important literary figures. They stand together as the two most outstanding writers in more than a quarter of a century of English literature. We cannot appreciate their place or their work without an understanding of their relationship.

Accordingly, this is a study of the mutual correspondence of Swift and Pope to determine the nature and the extent of their personal relationship. It will be based primarily upon the hitherto unstudied texts of their letters, and it will be as objective as is possible. The letters will be examined in complete detail to clarify every phase of their personal relationship; every problem will originate in the letters, and every conclusion will be based upon passages in them.

These letters were written in the early eighteenth century when the art of letter-writing was at its height. Swift's letters have been enthusiastically praised<sup>25</sup> by many critics because of their charm, sincerity, and frankness.

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25 Reginald B. Johnson, Eighteenth Century Letters (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1898), I, Introduction, xxiv.

Swift had the essential gifts of good letter-writing,<sup>26</sup> and "could reproduce in his writing not only the spoken word, but the whispered word."<sup>27</sup> He is at his best with Pope and Dr. John Arbuthnot.<sup>28</sup>

While the loose, friendly style of Swift's letters has impressed his readers with his greatness as a letter-writer, and with the absolute sincerity of the feelings he expressed in them, Pope's "correct" style has had a similar, if opposite, effect. He has been accused of being too artificial,<sup>29</sup> affected,<sup>30</sup> too literary,<sup>31</sup> and, most serious, of writing, always, with an eye to publication.<sup>32</sup> As a result, the feelings expressed in his letters are generally regarded with suspicion. Sir Leslie

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26 Stanley Lane-Poole, "Swift's Correspondence," The Quarterly Review, 218, January, 1913, pp. 49-70.

Cf. Rev. J. H. Bernard, "Introduction," The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, Vol. I (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1910), p. xxxi.

27 Irvine, op. cit., p. 181.

28 Lane-Poole, op. cit., pp. 49-70.

29 Stephen L. Gwynn, The Life and Friendships of Jonathan Swift (London: Butterworth, 1933), p. 174.

30 Leslie Stephen, Swift (London: Macmillan and Co., 1927), p. 206.

31 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 96.

32 Loc. cit.

Cf. Gwynn, op. cit., p. 251.

Stephen's attitude is typical:

Yet their correspondence shows an affection which was no doubt heightened by the consciousness of each that the friendship of his most famous contemporary author was creditable; but which, upon Swift's side at least, was thoroughly sincere and cordial, and strengthened with advancing years.<sup>33</sup>

But, Swift had quarreled with at least one of his very famous contemporaries, Steele, and Pope's quarrels with men like Dennis who were, no doubt, "famous contemporary authors" were immortalized in the Dunciad.

There still remains the problem presented by Pope's style. It must be remembered that the letter-writing of the age was formal and artificial,<sup>34</sup> "it was ceremonious even between equals."<sup>35</sup> Swift, raised in Ireland and exiled in Ireland, did not write a typical eighteenth century letter. Pope did. For him, as for the majority of the letter-writers of the eighteenth century, the letter was not so much a vehicle for the statement of personal feeling as it was a means for expressing "the delicacies and refinements of personal intercourse. It formed a natural channel through which the elaborate and leisured civilization of the time might flow."<sup>36</sup>

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33 Stephen, op. cit., p. 169.

34 Bernard, op. cit., p. xxxiii.

35 Bertram Newman, Jonathan Swift (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), p. 39.

36 Lytton Strachey, "Pope, Addison, Steele, and Swift," Characters and Commentaries (London: Chatto, 1933), p. 14.



The fact is that both men must have been aware of the public value of their letters. Sherburn objects to the view that Pope's letters are insincere because they were ostensibly written with a view to publication. He points out that Pope used the covers and backs of letters as paper when he was translating Homer, and he calls this "perfect evidence that in the days of 1713-19 Pope was not 'saving' letters."<sup>37</sup> The inference here is that he was not concerned with publishing letters at this time, and that he did not write letters for publication. However, he and Swift both saved their letters later. Whether these letters were consciously written for publication or not, one must remember that Swift was also exposed to this danger. Commenting on one of Swift's letters to Pope, Mr. Stephen L. Gwynn observes:

It would be imbecile [sic] to suppose that a man who writes such a letter does not know that he is writing literature: or that Swift at the height of his fame, writing to Pope, did not know that the letter might probably be preserved . . . But the essential . . . is that a letter like this is no less spontaneous, no less heartfelt, because it is well written.<sup>38</sup>

Pope could write letters. He has been given credit for re-establishing the letter in popular esteem by the publication of his correspondence.<sup>39</sup> His standards of what was well written

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<sup>37</sup> George W. Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> Gwynn, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>39</sup> Dawson, op. cit., p. 12.

were different from those of Swift. He strove only, and always, to write "coorectly". Why should his letters be "less heart-felt, less spontaneous", because they are "correctly" written?

For all of the objections against his style he holds a very high place in the history of letter-writing. He is regarded, by one critic at least, as one of the greatest writers of love letters of all time:

. . . these letters [Pope to Martha and Teresa Blount] seem to me to be exquisite specimens of love-making on paper. . . . With the Blounts he is tender, sympathetic, playful, and affectionate. Nothing can be less tolerable than this sort of letter unless it is composed with extreme skill and tact. No kind of letter is . . . less suitable for publication. There are perils on every side--perils of absurdity, perils of exaggeration, perils of sentiment, perils of bad taste. It is Pope's glory that he has surmounted them all. 40

Saintsbury, too, is wary of placing Pope too low in the history of letter-writing. He refuses to give him "the first place", but admits that "hardly even his verse convinces one more of that extraordinary power of expression as he wished to express things"<sup>41</sup> which he possessed.

This discussion is of special significance because of the nature of our investigation. We are going to examine the letters of Swift and Pope in detail as the manifestation of their personal relationship. We shall not be much concerned

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40 Paul, op. cit. p. 191.

41 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 96.

with the greatness of either of these men as letter-writers, but we shall be deeply concerned with the sincerity and truth of their statements in their letters. Although the sincerity of Swift in his letters has never been questioned by his critics, Pope's has been doubted, and we must take this into consideration in our examination of the letters.

However, before we allow the style of these letters of Pope to detract from their sincerity we must distinguish between the essential characteristics of the style of these two men. Pope tried always to write "correctly"; that is, according to the rules. As a poet he was naturally inclined to precision in diction and formality in structure. His letters are as smoothly turned as his couplets. Swift, on the other hand, had failed in his early poetry. He did not find his natural medium of expression until he adopted the facile prose of The Tale Of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels. Thus, it can be seen that the seeming artificiality of Pope's style in his letters is not conclusive evidence of the insincerity of their contents. Neither can we judge, from the standpoint of style alone, that those of Swift are completely sincere.

Gwynn, who maintains a suspicious attitude toward Pope's letters, touches on this point in a discussion of one of Pope's letters to Swift:

. . . he Pope never understood like Swift the technique of prose. In his own medium constant revision was necessary. . . . one is conscious of unduly laboured

expression in Pope's familiar letters.<sup>42</sup>

Before we take a definite position on this problem of the sincerity of these letters we must note that the men concerned discussed this very difficulty in them. Swift wrote:

I find you have been a writer of letters almost from your infancy; and, by your own confession, had schemes even then of epistolary fame. Montaigne says, that if he could have excelled in any kind of writing, it would have been in letters; but I doubt they would not have been natural, for it is plain that all of Pliny's letters were written with a view to publishing, and I accuse Voiture himself of the same crime, although he be an author I am fond of. They cease to be letters when they become a jeu d'esprit.<sup>43</sup>

Pope responded immediately:

I am pleased however with your partiality, and it is for that reason that I have kept some of your letters and some of my other friends. These, if I put together for my own secret satisfaction, in reviewing a life passed in innocent amusements and studies, not without the good-will of worthy and ingenious men, do not therefore say that I aim at epistolary fame. I never had any fame less in my head; but the fame I most covet indeed is that which must be derived to me from my friendships.<sup>44</sup>

Swift, at any rate, seems to have been convinced by this reply for he makes no further accusations. In addition, it appears that he, too, was saving letters for his "secret satisfaction." In 1735 he answered Pope's questions about the publication of

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42 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 251.

43 Rev. Whitewell Elwin and William J. Courthope, editors, The Works of Alexander Pope (London: J. Murray, 1871-89), VII, 179: Swift to Pope, Feb. 26, 1730.

44 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 191: Pope to Swift, April 9, 1730.

their correspondence in a manner which reveals his attitude towards their letters completely:

You need not fear any consequence in the commerce that has so long passed between us; although I never destroyed one of your letters [*italics not in original*] . . . Neither did our letters contain any turns of wit, of fancy, of politics, or satire, but mere innocent friendship; yet I am loath that any letters, from you and a very few other friends, should die before me. I believe we neither of us leaned our head upon our left hand to study what we should write next. [*italics not in original.*]<sup>45</sup>

The italicized passages illustrate the fact that Swift was aware of the value of the letters, but that he had no doubt as to their sincerity.

Taking everything into consideration, it would seem that the letters of Swift are honest, sincere statements of his feelings for his friend, Alexander Pope, unhampered in large part by the knowledge that they would also be of interest to the public and posterity.<sup>46</sup> Although we cannot make so broad a statement in regard to those of Pope, the same is true of them in general, and we can, by comparing the sentiments expressed by him with those of Swift, arrive at what must have been his personal feelings for the Dean.

A further problem which presents itself is but another

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<sup>45</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 333: Swift to Pope, Sept. 3, 1735.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen L. Gwynn, "Pope and Swift," Masters of English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1904), p. 174: "Yet he [Pope] inspired deep friendship. No letters in the world show a warmer feeling of one man for another than those Swift wrote to him and about him."

aspect of this same question. It arises from the mystery which surrounds the publication of the Swift-Pope correspondence. Mr. Courthope, in his unfriendly Life<sup>47</sup> of Pope, gives the state of the question clearly:

Nor will it be necessary to track minutely Pope's subterranean workings to procure the publication of the correspondence between himself and Swift. His efforts to induce the Dean to return his letters date from the publication of Curll's volume in 1735: Swift, after long resistance, returned them to him by Lord Orrey in July, 1737. The correspondence was published in England in 1741, as a sequel to the quarto of 1737, and also in folio and octavo. In the Preface to the quarto it is stated that the letters are 'copied from an impression sent from Dublin, and said to have been printed by the Dean's direction.' Whatever was the truth as to the place where the correspondence was first published -- and Faulkner, the Irish publisher, always declared that the first edition was published in London -- there can be no doubt that the Dublin edition was printed by the direction of Swift, from a copy sent to him from England. Though Pope professed to be annoyed at the publication of the letters, and laid the responsibility of their publication on others, there is the strongest reason to believe that the volume from which they were reprinted was sent to the Dean by himself, and that it was itself printed from manuscripts which he had supplied.<sup>48</sup>

Mr. Courthope's conjectures have been substantiated and elucidated, in the main, by recent scholarship.

Mr. Mack, in an article in the Library, attempts to show from textual and other evidence, that Letters Between Dr. Swift, Mr. Pope, &c. From the Year 1714 to 1736: Published from a Copy Transmitted from Dublin. London: Printed for T. Cooper in the Year MDCCXLI, a copy of which he had found in the Harvard

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47 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., Vol. V.

48 Ibid., p. 293.

University Library, "represents the true first printing, and in a sense the true first edition, of the Swift-Pope correspondence."<sup>49</sup> He tries to prove that this volume -- Professor Teerink and the Yale University Library possess the only other known copies -- is the "clandestine volume" which was sent to Swift, the one whose existence is postulated above by Mr. Courthope.

We are not concerned with the problem of identifying first editions. However, it is common knowledge that in publishing his correspondence Pope edited his letters and those of his friends. Dilke showed that letters which had been addressed originally to Caryll were published as having been written to Addison, and Sherburn states that:

Pope transferred letters from one correspondent to another . . . he combined two or three letters into one . . . he consequently misdated events intentionally or unintentionally . . . he changed the phraseology of letters when printing them -- though usually, if not always, such revision had no other purpose than literary effect. 50

We are here concerned with how much of this was done in the publication of the Swift-Pope correspondence.

To establish an answer we shall investigate, with the aid of Mr. Mack, the known facts and circumstances of the publication of this correspondence. (1) In the spring or summer

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49 Maynard Mack, "The First Printing of the Letters of Pope and Swift," The Library, Fourth Series, Vol. XIX, 1938-1939, p. 485.

50 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 21.

of 1740 a volume of letters was sent to the Dean. This is the "clandestine volume." (2) This volume passed through the hands of Pope, Orrey, Faulkner, and Swift. (3) It was delivered to Swift in Ireland, and he assumed that it came to him from Pope. He released it to his publisher, Faulkner, with the addition in manuscript of certain names previously omitted, some "interlineations" and "many remarkable notes." (4) Faulkner, the publisher, wrote to Pope at this point for authorization to print the letters. A month passed before Pope's refusal arrived. (5) In the following weeks Pope somehow secured the "clandestine volume", and he kept the first twenty-two pages when he returned it to Orrey. (6) Pope told Orrey that he had had a copy of this "clandestine volume" made when it was in his hands at Twickenham. (7) In June, 1741, two months after the authorized edition purporting to be taken from the Dublin printing had been released in London, the finished reprint appeared in Dublin.<sup>51</sup>

Mr. Vinton A. Dearing admits that this "Cooper" edition is the earliest printed text of the correspondence we have, but he is unwilling to permit an absolute identification of the "clandestine volume" with this edition. This, of course, is the purpose of Mr. Mack's article. Dearing admits only the possibility and concludes:

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51 Mack, op. cit., pp. 465-485.



Yet in the final analysis, it is not quite accurate to equate absolutely the Cooper edition and the clandestine volume. The text, yes, but we must note that the Cooper edition . . . is the second issue of the first edition, and the clandestine volume, no doubt per se, is the first. 52

Yet, it is the text which is our concern. What is important to us is the information these investigations provide concerning the editing and revising done in this publication. From the outline above it can be seen that Swift participated actively in this process. Pope is not the only guilty one, as biographers of either Pope or Swift intimate. Both went over the letters before they were published. Of all the students of Swift, Ricardo Quintana was nearest the truth when he wrote, "It is possible that Swift understood and cooperated in Pope's scheme to publish their correspondence." 53

Swift's annotations and changes were, according to Mack, mostly concerned with 'plainly Irish' affairs and politics, and, besides these, he added notes, interlineations and names. 54 The general purpose of these emendations was to make the text clear. Orrey was urged by Pope to go over the letters, but he probably made no changes. Pope, himself, proposed to make large corrections and improvements until he had seen the volume,

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52 Vinton A. Dearing, "New Light on the First Printing of the Letters of Pope and Swift," The Library, Fourth Series, Vol. XXIV, 1944, p.80.

53 Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift, (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 338.

54 Mack, op. cit., p. 475.

when he decided to let the text stand. Whether he did let it stand remains a question.<sup>55</sup>

Whether he did or not, we may be certain that almost any revisions made by him would undoubtedly have been approved by Swift. The question of editing and revising works is discussed in the letters of Swift and Pope on the occasion of the death of their mutual friend, John Gay. Pope advised Swift of his death,<sup>56</sup> and, while the Dean deeply mourned the loss of a friend, his next concern was with his works.

I hope he has left you the care of anything he may have left, and I wish that, with those already extant, they could all be published in a fair edition, under your inspection [*italics not in original*].<sup>57</sup>

Soon thereafter, Gay's comedy, Achilles, which had been brought out a week before his death under the management of Gay's friend, patron, and official literary executor, the Duke of Queensbury, was printed in Ireland. The Dean, who thought the play poor, was aroused:

I wish there had been so much cunning used as to have let the sisters know that he expected they would let him dispose of Mr. Gay's writings as himself and other friends should advise; and I heartily wish his Grace had entirely stifled that Comedy, if it were possible, than do an injury to our friend's reputation only to get a hundred or two pounds to a couple of, perhaps, insignificant women . . .

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 474.

<sup>56</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 291: Pope to Swift, Dec. 5, 1732.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 292: Swift to Pope, Jan., 1733.

I think it is incumbent upon you to see that nothing more be published of his that will lessen his reputation for the sake of adding a few pence to his sisters . . . If the case were mine, my ashes would rise in judgement against you [*Italics not in original*].<sup>58</sup>

Swift expressed his own ideas on the function and criterion of an editor quite clearly. Indeed, he regarded Pope's abilities in this field very highly. He himself never sent the poet anything for publication without giving him full power to alter and change the material in any way he deemed best.<sup>59</sup> And Pope expressed his attitude on the subject of revision and edition with equal clarity: "Our poor friend's papers are now in my hands, and for as much as is so, I will take care to suppress things unworthy of him."<sup>60</sup>

In all probability, then, we do not have the letters of the Swift-Pope correspondence as they were written. At most,

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58 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 299: Swift to Pope March 31, 1733.

59 Ibid., p. 93; Swift to Pope, Dec. 5, 1726.

Pope managed and edited their Miscellanies, and this letter is a good example of Swift's faith in Pope's abilities:

. . . since you have received the verses I most earnestly entreat you to burn those which you do not approve, and in those few where you may not dislike some parts, blot out the rest, and sometimes, though it be against the laziness of your nature, be so kind as to make a few corrections, if the matter will bear them.

60 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 305: Pope to Swift, April 20, 1733.

we have them as their authors wanted us to have them. However, it is not likely that Pope substituted any letters to others as letters to Swift, because Swift was still alive when the volume was published and had himself assisted in the process which ended in their release. Then, too, Swift was a careful, if an irregular correspondent. Most often, he had the letter he was answering before him as he wrote, so that the body of the letters, in general, presents a unified inter-related whole. No major alteration could stand unobserved, and this is evidenced by some noticeable deletions, gaps, and missing letters. It would seem that most of the emendations were made, not to falsify, but to make the text clearer and to protect Swift from political difficulties; that is, if Pope let the text stand as he said he did in his letter to Orrey.<sup>61</sup> Those letters whose publication was permitted were probably not altered materially.<sup>62</sup>

The difficulty presented by the revision of the text is not as great as it would appear to be. Most of the letters published in the eighteenth century were revised before publication.<sup>63</sup> In fact, when one considers that these letters were printed during the lives of the men who wrote them, that most of the people mentioned in them were also still alive, the

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61 Ibid., VIII, 450: Pope to Orrey, Dec., 1740.

62 Mack, op. cit., p. 474.

63 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 21.

reasons for revision become plain enough. This problem would arise in the publication of any correspondence during the lives of the authors. Saintsbury observes the necessity of some revision and discusses the proper method:

. . . Nothing must be put in -- that is clear; but as to what may or should be left out, 'there's the rub'. Perhaps the best criterion, though it may be admitted to be not very easy of application, is "Would the author, in publishing, have left it out or not?" 64

In the Swift-Pope correspondence it was the authors themselves who handled the revision. Further, we shall only be concerned with the friendship and personal relationship of Swift and Pope, rather than with the politics of the time, their social standing, or their abilities as letter-writers about which they were most concerned in editing these letters. If we examine them for the friendship they reveal, we shall find, at least, that friendship which their authors wanted us to see. It is possible that we might not know some of the difficulties and differences they had, but we can be certain that we do have a fair statement of the positive aspects of their personal relationship. The fact that the correspondence continued for so long a time is prima facie evidence of the existence of a friendly relationship which knew no major difficulties. Such a conclusion is corroborated by countless references in letters to other individuals by both Pope and Swift, letters published, in many instances,

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64 Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 59.

at a later time by other people. The biographical facts of each man's life further support this conclusion.

The Elwin-Courthope edition of Pope's Works contains all his letters to Swift, and that text is regarded as standard. It is used by all biographers of Pope and Swift. Sherburn, for example, admits the problem of Pope's practice of 'cooking' his letters, and warns that:

. . . without warning the reader Warburton, Bowles, Elwin, and Courthope all made intentional or unintentional changes in Pope's phrasing, and they [*italics in original*] at least should hesitate to blame him for doing likewise. 65

Nevertheless, Sherburn himself uses the Elwin-Courthope text, and we shall do the same thing.

In this study we shall accept the texts of the letters as we have them in Ball's edition of The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift and in the Elwin-Courthope edition of Pope's Works as the manifestation of their personal relationship. Further, no isolated passages, distinctly different in tone and in kind from the rest of the letters, will be used as an example of a constant feeling or attitude. Only predominant characteristics of the correspondence as a whole will be so cited.

These letters constitute, then, the only monument these men have left us of their friendship. We shall examine it, as it is, in an effort to understand how friendly they were, and how they could have been friends.

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65 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 23.

## CHAPTER II

### DAMON AND PYTHIAS

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the particular aspects of the personal relationship between Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift as they are revealed in the letters. An understanding of what each derived from their association, aside from those psychological, emotional, and intellectual benefits which almost any friendship will provide, will enable us to treat the broader aspects of their relationship in an objective manner. One would expect that a friendship between such important figures as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift would have a high practical utility. To understand their ability to reconcile their differences in philosophical outlook, politics, and religion, and to understand the nature of their relationship itself, we must first see it in action, for, from the actions or operations of a thing we may judge of its nature.

Accordingly, this chapter will deal, first, with the practical, particular benefits and obligations which were a part of this friendship, and, second, with the specific likes and dislikes they either shared or did not share. Later chapters will deal with the broader questions of misanthropy, politics, philosophy, religion, and friendship in the relationship. Here the emphasis will be on the seemingly trivial, particular things which reveal so much of the personalities

involved. These aspects only seem trivial; a comprehension of their friendship in action not only contains the key to the larger problems to be examined later, but it will enable us to examine those questions with a clear idea of the motives of the men concerned.

In Chapter I the text of the letters was established as the manifestation of their personal relationship. The investigation of this chapter, then, will center on these texts; every problem and every conclusion will be derived from them. This primary source material will be utilized and cited as the highest authority, and secondary source material will be employed only when the passages concerned necessitate such reference for clarification or elucidation.

We know none of the circumstances which surrounded the first meeting of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. On March 7, 1713 Mr. Pope's poem, Windsor Forest, was published, and two days later Jonathan Swift wrote to Stella: "Mr. Pope has published a fine poem called Windsor Forest. Read it."<sup>1</sup> This is the first instance, in his extant works, that Jonathan Swift mentioned the name of Alexander Pope, although they had

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Scott, editor, "Journal to Stella," The Works of Jonathan Swift (Edinburgh: A. Constable and Co., 1824), III, 128.



undoubtedly met before this time<sup>2</sup>. At any rate, they were very good friends by September, 1713, for we have evidence that Swift was among the most active promoters of the Iliad subscriptions:

He instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope ( a Papist ) who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe: "for, "says he," the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him."<sup>3</sup>

The Dunciad and Gulliver's Travels remain to show their mutual enthusiasm for, and interest in, their famous Scriblerus Club. Thus, they became friends while Swift was at the height of his power,<sup>4</sup> and they had only about one and one-half years in which to build the foundation of whatever friendship was to be theirs by anything other than letters. For, soon after the fall of the Tories, in the summer of the year 1714, Swift took up that residence in Ireland which was to remain unbroken for the rest of his life, except for two short visits to England more than ten years later.

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2 Quintana, op. cit., p. 206:

. . . during the early years of the Tory ministry Swift and Pope seem not to have known each other . . . When Swift returned to England in 1713 he and Pope were already sworn friends, having probably met before the publication of Windsor Forest.

3 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 4, n. 2:

This is recorded as "Bishop Kennet's account of Swift's behaviour in the queen's ante-chamber on Nov. 2, 1713."

4 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 71.

Of their first acquaintance we know very little. Swift was a very busy man, and he was constantly preoccupied with the growing breach between the ministers, Bolingbroke and Oxford, while Pope, too, had his own interests. The only estimate we can make of their relationship at this time is through its effect, that is, their later friendship as it is revealed in their letters. The only contact they had with each other from 1714 to 1725, and, except for the two short visits in 1726 and 1727, from 1727 to 1741 was their correspondence. Therefore, the key to their personal relationship must be found in their letters.

Before proceeding to an examination of the nature of their friendship we shall note several broad similarities between the personalities of these two men which can be derived from the correspondence considered as a whole. Both men were outcasts and exiles politically;<sup>5</sup> Pope all his life as a Roman Catholic,<sup>6</sup> and Swift after 1714 as the ex-leader of the Tory journalists

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5 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 93: Swift to Pope, December 5, 1726:

If you will give me leave to join us, is not your life and mine a state of power, and dependence a state of slavery? We care not three pence whether a Prince or Minister will see us or not: we are not afraid of having ill offices done to us, nor are at the trouble of guarding our words for fear of giving offence.

6 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 171: Pope to Swift, Nov., 28, 1729.

and propagandists in a Whig dominated era. Neither was a philosopher of any moment, although Pope considered himself to be one.<sup>7</sup> Both inclined to fideism in theology regardless of the differences of their formal beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Both were regarded as men of taste and wit; each regarded the other as such. Each prided himself on his friends and his loyalty to his friends. Swift's added years and his fall from power made him conscious of his physical defects, and aroused in him an interest in, and pre-occupation with, health and the coming of death, an attitude which never left Pope's mind. This enabled them to regard each other as fellow invalids<sup>9</sup> and led to a sympathy and understanding of each other's physical pains and torments which no normal companion could have given. In general, they shared the same philosophical outlook even in the question of misanthropy. These generalities, all derived from the correspondence, indicate

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<sup>7</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 323: Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734:

. . . do not laugh at my gravity, but permit me to wear the beard of a philosopher, till I pull it off, and make a jest of it myself.

Cf. p. 341: Pope to Swift, March 25, 1736; p. 326: Swift to Pope, Nov. 1, 1734.

<sup>8</sup> Quintana, op. cit., p. 72.

Cf. Robert K. Root, The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 130: Swift to Pope, May 10, 1728.

that they had enough in common to be friends. It remains necessary for us to examine the nature and extent of their friendship.

In 1713 Jonathan Swift was a man who, if he wanted to, could do things for people.<sup>10</sup> We might expect to find, then, some acknowledgement of favors received in Pope's letters of that year. Indeed, we do find this, but, since Pope was not in a position to receive political advantages because of his religion, the favors bestowed and acknowledged are social ones in the main:

. . . for I have all the obligations in nature to him. He has brought me into better company than I cared for, made me merrier when I was sick than I had a mind to be, and put me upon making poems on purpose that he might alter them.<sup>11</sup>

The only practical benefits alluded to by Pope are social ones, and these could not have been too great, for Pope was already the friend of Addison, Congreve, Walsh, Lansdowne, and most of the men of importance at the time.<sup>12</sup> Nor does Pope dwell on these benefits; he quickly and carefully thanks Swift for the personal, friendly offices he had rendered.

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10 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 71: "In 1712 Swift was at the height of his career, confidant of the Lord Treasurer and ablest writer of the Oxford Ministry. He was influential with everyone but Queen Anne, Archbishop York, and the Somersets."

11 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

12 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 64.

Swift had been very active as a promotor of the Iliad subscription.<sup>13</sup> The only tangible return which the letters reveal that he received for this work was the praise which Pope bestowed upon Bolingbroke, and hence, indirectly, on Swift and the cause, in the Preface of the work when it was later published. "You were pretty bold," wrote Swift, "in mentioning Lord Bolingbroke in that Preface."<sup>14</sup> This reference to Lord Bolingbroke was, however, small enough reward:

Such a genius as my Lord Bolingbroke, not more distinguished in the great scenes of business than in all the useful and entertaining parts of learning, has not refused to be the critic of these sheets and the patron of this writer.<sup>15</sup>

Pope also aided Swift in a similar, though not so personal a matter, by securing subscriptions for the publication of the poems of his friend, Mrs. Barber.<sup>16</sup>

Both were members of the Scriblerus Club at this time, and the pleasures derived from it must have been comparatively equal. It must have been important to both of them for it finds mention in Pope's second letter:

Dr. Arbuthnot is singular in his opinion, and imagines your only design is to attend at full leisure to the life and

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<sup>13</sup> Supra, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1713.

<sup>15</sup> F. Elrington Ball, editor, The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1910-14), II, 287, n.3.

<sup>16</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 221; Pope to Swift, March 20, 1731.

and adventures of Scriblerus. This, indeed, must be granted of greater importance than all the rest, and I wish I could promise so well of you. The top of my own ambition is to contribute to that great work, and I shall translate Homer by and by. <sup>17</sup>

Neither forgot this ambition, the immediate source of Swift's Gulliver's Travels and, less directly, the Dunciad.

Since they were both involved in the social affairs of the time, both active writers, and both more or less regarded as men of taste and wit, we should not find that either benefited socially in any large degree from their friendship. The association of two men in their positions would have redounded in almost equal credit or discredit to each in the eyes of the world. However, because of Swift's importance, it is most likely that Pope gained the most in this respect. We must remember, though, that Pope was by no means unknown at this time, and that it was through Pope that Swift met Gay.

So much for London and the days of their early friendship. After 1714, with Swift in Ireland, neither could have hoped to benefit too greatly from their relationship. Swift was dejected and shocked by the defeat of the Tories, and withdrew, out of necessity, circumstances, and a sense of despair, from activities of any kind. <sup>18</sup>

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17 Ibid., p. 7: Pope to Swift, June 18, 1714.

18 Quintana, op. cit., pp. 206-212.

Cf. Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 14: Swift to Pope, August 30, 1716.

You are to understand that I live in the corner of a vast unfurnished house. My family consists of a steward, a groom, a helper in the stables, a footman, and an old maid, who are all at board wages, and when I do not dine abroad or make an entertainment, which last is very rare, I eat a mutton pie and drink half a pint of wine. My amusements are defending my small dominions against the Archbishop, and endeavouring to reduce my rebellious choir. Perditur haec misero lux. 19

Swift, the Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin, was no longer in a position to help anyone. In fact, friendship with him at this time was dangerous, but, as far as the letters are concerned, this shift in fortune in no way impaired their friendship.

Swift's withdrawal from the world and politics, however, was not permanent. By 1720 he was again in the political lists. His Proposal for the Use of Irish Manufactures had been published, and he was anxious to have a voice in England to defend him and to justify his position before it could be questioned by the Crown. Accordingly, he wrote a letter stating his principles and his purposes. This letter was addressed to Alexander Pope. In it Swift defended himself by a clear statement of his political principles and by emphasizing his services to the Whigs while he was in power:

But whatever opportunities a constant attendance of four years might have given me, for endeavouring to do good offices for particular persons, I deserve at least to find tolerable quarter from those of the other party, for many of which I was a constant advocate with the Earl of Oxford. He knows how often I pressed him in favor of Mr. Congreve, Mr. Addison, Mr. Rowe, and Mr. Steele . . . I remember

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19 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

it was in those times a usual subject of raillery towards me among the ministers, that I never came to them without a Whig in my sleeve, which I do not saw with any view toward making my court; for the new principles affixed to those of that denomination I did then, and do now, from my heart, abhor, detest, and abjure. <sup>20</sup>

He was not looking for favors; he wanted his position known and defended. And, although Mr. Pope was not interested in politics, Swift chose him, of all the men he knew in London, as his defender. It is difficult for us to imagine Pope, the author of the Dunciad, defending anyone, yet, he frequently took abuse, in silence, for works of Swift and Gay. <sup>21</sup> His association with Swift forced him to take the role of a defender on more than one occasion.

To be the friend of Swift was dangerous enough at any time in his life, and to admit it and defend him in public was certainly a manifestation of friendship. Swift had a constant representative in England in Mr. Alexander Pope:

Since then I had a conference with Sir Robert Walpole, who expressed his desire of having seen you again before you left us. He said he observed a willingness in you to live among us, which I did not deny, but at the same time told him, you had no such design in your head for your coming this time, which was merely to see a few of those you loved; but that indeed all those wished it, and particularly Lord Peterborough and myself, who wished you loved Ireland less, had you any reason to love England more. I said nothing

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<sup>20</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

<sup>21</sup> Sherburn, op. cit., p. 156.



but what I think would induce any man to be as fond of you as I, plain truth, did they know either it or you. <sup>22</sup>

Pope understood Swift's position. Favors were welcome, but they were not sought. They would not be accepted at a cost of change in principle. Swift would have answered Sir Robert Walpole no differently.

Pope was always a genial host and a great entertainer. When a young Mr. Stopford from Ireland presented him with a letter from Swift <sup>23</sup> asking him to show the young man around and introduce him to Arbuthnot, Gay, and the wits, he responded nobly. <sup>24</sup> Nor is this an isolated occurrence. The years to come brought many, many Irish visitors to England to the door of Mr. Pope, <sup>25</sup> visitors sent there by the Dean. In fact, Swift's name became the key to Pope's hospitality to many who over-looked the formality of asking Swift for a letter of introduction, or permission, even, to use his name. This situation became so bad that Pope was finally forced to complain about it:

Yet I am sure, nothing that you and I would say to each other . . . could hurt either of us so much . . . as the intervening, officious impertinence of those goers between us, who in England pretend to intimacies with you, and in Ireland to intimacies with me. I cannot but receive any

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<sup>22</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 74: Pope to Swift, Sept. 3, 1726.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 45: Swift to Pope, July 19, 1725.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 50: Pope to Swift, Sept. 14, 1725.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 77: Swift to Pope, Feb. 6, 1730.

that call upon me in your name, and in truth they take it in vain too often. 26

Although he voiced this complaint, he made it quite clear in his next letter that he would always be glad to entertain anyone who really came to him from Swift:

I had written to you by that gentleman from the Bath, but I did not know him, and everybody that comes from Ireland pretends to be a friend of the Dean's. I am always glad to see any that are truly so, and therefore do not mistake anything I said, so as to discourage your sending any such to me. 27

In all fairness to Swift's position in this matter, he did state that he regretted that his name was being used in such a manner in his reply to Pope's complaint:

I am sorry at my heart that you are pestered with people who come to you in my name, and I profess to you that it is without my knowledge. I am confident I shall hardly ever have occasion again to recommend, for my friends here are very few, and fixed to the freehold, from whence nothing but death will remove them. 28

Nor was Swift alone guilty of sending people to his friend for favors, although it would seem that he was the more regular offender. There is an interesting exchange of letters in 1738-1739 which illustrates not only Pope's practice in this regard, but the type of "services" which the relationship afforded, as well as Swift's inability to keep out of politics -- even at the age of seventy-two. In October, 1738, Pope sent a letter

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26 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 323: Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734.

27 Ibid., p. 329: Pope to Swift, Dec. 19, 1734.

28 Ibid., p. 326: Swift to Pope, Nov. 1, 1734.

to Swift by one Mr. William Lamb. This individual had been Lyttleton's nurse, and Lyttleton was a good friend of Mr. Pope. The letter contained a high recommendation of Mr. Lamb and asked Swift to give him a place in his choir.<sup>29</sup> The Dean, in his next state of lucidity, was able to report that he had given Mr. Lamb half a vicarship, at fifty pounds per annum, and that this soon would be increased to a full one. But in the same letter, Swift asked Pope to ask his friend, Lyttleton, to ask the Prince of Wales to nominate a certain Mr. A. M'Aulay to a parliamentary seat in Ireland vacated by the death of Dr. Coghill.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Pope's next letter carried the news that Lyttleton had done his part.<sup>31</sup> Swift, it can be seen, was still in Irish politics.

In 1726 and, again, in 1727 Swift visited England; he resided, for the most part, with the Popes at Twickenham. For the first time in over ten years they had an opportunity to enjoy at first hand the fruits of the friendship they had maintained by correspondence. This reunion is especially important in measuring the nature of their relationship. One often contracts friendships which are interrupted by a separation of the

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<sup>29</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 367: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1738.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 370: Swift to Pope, May 10, 1739.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 371: Pope to Swift, May 17, 1739.

individuals involved. This is common enough. Often such relationships are continued in letters. However, all too often, a reunion of the persons shows one or the other of them that they no longer have anything in common, or that the qualities which he had previously admired are now found to be lacking or no longer admirable. The friendship terminates, and letters cease to be written. In a very real sense an extended visit of two friends together after a separation of more than ten years is a severe test and trial of their friendship, one which the relationship of Pope and Swift survived.

The letters reveal that they passed the time, when both were well enough, in rambling through the country and in literary activities. There is no reason to believe that they were not very happy here. Swift's letter to Tickell indicates some of the diversions they enjoyed during this first reunion: "I have lived these two months past in the country, either at Twickenham with Mr. Pope, or rambling with him and Mr. Gay for a fortnight together."<sup>32</sup> But the main diversion was unquestionably Gulliver, for it was at this time that Swift and Pope set into motion the elaborate machinery they had contrived to insure its anonymous publication.<sup>33</sup> This plot owed something to "Pope's

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<sup>32</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 68: Swift to Tickell, July 7, 1726.

<sup>33</sup> Newman, op. cit., p. 328.

innate love of the stratagem, but it was chiefly a device on Swift's part to disclaim the authorship of the satire,"<sup>34</sup> if, because of its political allusions, this should become necessary. This, we can be certain, provided the two friends with an endless source of delight, for Swift shared "Pope's innate love of the stratagem" or, as a biographer of Swift has phrased it: "At all periods of his life Swift loved literary mystification."<sup>35</sup>

Nor was this their only literary diversion. In 1726 they worked over their Miscellanies, two volumes of which had been published but which were not issued until June of 1727 during Swift's second visit to England, from April to September in 1727.<sup>36</sup> We find that they wrote the preface to this issue on May 27, 1727,<sup>37</sup> but Swift's main interest at this time was Mr. Pope's new poem, later called the Dunciad. Pope acknowledged to Swift that without him, "it had never been."<sup>38</sup> Since we shall treat the subject of literature and their relationship later,<sup>39</sup> it will be sufficient in this chapter to note the benefits received by Mr. Pope and the services conferred by Swift, by referring to

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34 Quintana, op. cit., p. 243.

35 Newman, op. cit., p. 78.

36 Quintana, op. cit., p. 332.

37 Loc. cit.

38 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 138: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1728.

39 Infra, Chap. V.

Sherburn's remark:

The whole trouble with Pope's projects against the Dunces was that they did not 'come off'; they lacked point; and so they lay idle until Swift, in his visits of 1726 and 1727, gave the necessary fillip to Pope's ingenuity, and the satirist definitely emerged. 40

When Swift returned to Ireland in August of 1726, many of the details of the publication of Gulliver's Travels were still undecided, and these were left in the hands of Mr. Pope.<sup>41</sup> The poet, of course, rendered these services with a will, and his arrangements resulted in Swift's receiving some remuneration for the work, the only money he ever received for any of the things he wrote.<sup>42</sup> Thus, he was able to write Pulteney, "I never got a farthing by anything I writ, except one about eight years ago, and that was by Mr. Pope's prudent management for me."<sup>43</sup>

After he had spent more than two months as Pope's guest at Twickenham in 1726, Swift wrote him a note from London in which he expressed his concern over Pope's illness by emphasizing his affection for him:

Pray let me have three lines . . . that will give me a better account of your health; which concerns me more than others, because I love and esteem you for reasons that most

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40 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 305.

41 Arthur E. Case, Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 5.

42 Gwynn, The Life and Friendships of Jonathan Swift (London: Butterworth, 1933), p. 93.

43 Ball, op. cit., V, 178: Swift to Pulteney, May 12, 1735.

others have little to do with, although you had never touched a pen further than with writing to me. <sup>44</sup>

This is an explicit statement of the nature of his regard, and of the importance of their letters in this relationship. It seems obvious that Swift had met the many literary friends and acquaintances of Alexander Pope on this his first visit to England, and that he felt called upon to note the difference which existed between his and their relationship with the poet. Pope's immediate answer shows that he understood his old friend's fears. <sup>45</sup> He hastened to reassure him that he, too, understood the difference of the feelings of his coterie and those of Swift himself. That he enjoyed Swift's visit very much, and keenly regretted his departure is obvious:

Many a short sigh you cost me the day I left you, and many more you will cost me, till the day you return. I really walked about like a man banished, and when I came home found it no home . . . you have made it more impossible for me to live at ease without you. Habitude itself would have done that, if I had less friendship in my nature than I have.

Besides my natural memory of you, you have made a local one, which presents you to me in every place I frequent. I shall never think more of Lord Cobham's, the woods of Cirencester, or the pleasing prospect of Bibury, but your idea must be joined with them; nor see one seat in my own garden, or one room in my own house, without a phantom of you, sitting or walking before me. . . . I wish I could think no more of it, but lie down and sleep till we meet again, and let that day, how far soever it be, be the morrow. <sup>46</sup>

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44 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 69: Swift to Pope, August 4, 1726.

45 Ibid., p. 70: Pope to Swift, August 22, 1726.

46 Loc. cit.

He leaves no doubt about the nature of their relationship either, and the sentiments he expresses are pathetic enough to make us believe that Jonathan Swift filled a very large space in the life of Alexander Pope.

It is in this letter of August 22, 1726 that the Silver Cup Incident is mentioned. Although the incident itself appears to be trivial, it gives us an unusual insight to the personality of Pope and the state of his relation with Swift. After staying two months with Pope at Twickenham Swift decided to return to Dublin. He spent a few days in London before sailing and, at this time, he purchased a gift which he sent to Pope. It was a set of small silver cups engraved as follows:

Jonathan Swift Alex<sup>ro</sup> Pope: Pignus amicitiae exiguum ingentis  
Pope thanked Swift for sending them, but his attitude was one of pained pride, as if he felt that Swift had sent him the cups in payment for his hospitality:

I am not pleased with them, but take them very kindly too; and had I suspected any such usage from you I should have enjoyed your company less than I really did, for at this rate I may say, nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te. I will bring you over just such another present when I go to the Deanery of St. Patrick's . . . <sup>47</sup>

Whether from pride or not, Pope was obviously one of those few people for whom it is difficult to do a favor, one of those very few people who are unable to accept gifts graciously. He wanted to bestow more favors upon his friends than he wished to receive

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<sup>47</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 70: Pope to Swift, August 22, 1726.



from them.

Swift's reply shows that this quality was not limited to his generosity at home, but included all of his activities:

When you talked of cups and impressions, it came into my head to imitate you in quoting Scripture, not to your advantage, I mean what was said to David by one of his brothers: "I knew the pride and the naughtiness of thy heart." I remember when it grieved your soul to see me pay a penny more than my club at an inn, when you had maintained me three months at bed and board; for which, if I had dealt with you in the Smithfield way, it would have cost me a hundred pounds, for I live worse here upon more. Did you ever consider that I am for life almost twice as rich as you, and pay no rent, and drink French wine twice as cheap as you do port, and have neither coach, chair, nor mother? . . . If you made me a present of a thousand pounds, I would not allow myself to be in your debt; and if I made you a present of two, I would not allow myself to be out of it. But I have not half your pride. 48

Swift knew Pope better than we do. He understood his friend's desire to be the host always, at home or away from home. If it arose from a too great pride, Swift knew his friend well enough to tolerate and overlook such a fault. In any event, his reply is masterful, and his application and elaboration of the Scriptural passage to Pope's attitude shows his own generous character toward his friend. In the peroration of his letter he makes it quite clear again that their association is such that neither could possibly be the debtor of the other, that it transcended all measurement, whether literary, social, or pecuniary.

However, Pope's pride was not easily soothed. Although

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48 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 72: Swift to Pope, August, 1726.

his next letter does not mention the cups, he is still thinking about the incident.<sup>49</sup> He reports his visit to Walpole, relates news about mutual friends, and makes a firm affirmation of the depth and extent of their friendship. To balance, more or less, the Latin quotation which Swift had had engraved upon the cups he encloses one of his own:

Tu mihi, seu magni superas jam saxa Timani  
Sive oram Illyrici legis aequoris.

It must have been very difficult to best Mr. Alexander Pope and, though the subject of the cups was dropped, it was not forgotten. A year and a half later, Oxford gave him a gift which he reported to Swift in the following manner: "My Lord Oxford has given me a great gold cup and salver, which quite eclipses your silver ones."<sup>50</sup> This half-serious, half-joking reference elicited no comment from Swift, and there is no further mention of this subject in the remainder of the correspondence.

This incident is important, for it comes at a time when their friendship should have been at its height, and it can be made to serve as a touchstone from which we may judge the nature and extent of their friendship. It is also important in that it reveals one of the petty differences or barriers which existed between them. In this instance, it was Swift, more than Pope,

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<sup>49</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 74: Pope to Swift, Sept. 3, 1726.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 109: Pope to Swift, Jan. 1728.

who made it possible for them to be friends in spite of their difficulties. It is never difficult to accept and admire the virtues and excellences of a friend, but when one is able to accept his faults also, true friendship exists. Since we find little reference in the letters to disagreements and difficulties, this particular incident is eminently worthy of consideration.

The association afforded countless favors of the "Silver Cup" type, which, however, were accepted as favors and did not have the repercussions we have noticed in that incident. For example, some time in 1730 Swift sent Pope a case of usquebaugh, for which he was anxiously waiting.<sup>51</sup> At another time, Pope forwarded a very interesting article to Swift:

I send you a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston, in New England, wherein you will find a real person, a member of their Parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver. If the fame of that traveller hath travelled thither, it has travelled very quick, to have folks christened already by the name of the supposed author.<sup>52</sup>

These are the pleasures of friendship and typical of the measurable advantages the relationship afforded.

Another service is implied in the correspondence, the service of most letters from friends, the communication of information concerning mutual friends and important events. These

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<sup>51</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 191: Pope to Swift, April 9, 1730.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 122: Pope to Swift, March 23, 1728.

letters are no exception; they served this purpose too. Here Swift benefits most, for the letters of Pope contain countless references to the activities of people Swift knew in London and in England, and of events of great importance. On the other hand, aside from literary references, the letters of Swift contain little such information. Pope knew no one in Ireland; he was not in the least interested in Irish politics.

After the "Silver Cups Incident" the tone of friendship in the correspondence reached a new high with the publication, first, of Gulliver's Travels,<sup>53</sup> and, second, of the Miscellany,<sup>54</sup> the immediate literary results of Swift's visits to England. Previously Swift had pointed out that they were not only the best of friends, but were in very similar situations,<sup>55</sup> and, when the Miscellany appeared, Pope joyfully announced that the world, too, would now know of their similarity:

Our Miscellany is now quite printed. I am prodigiously pleased with this joint volume, in which, methinks, we look like friends, side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing interchangeably, and walking down hand in hand to posterity, not in the stiff forms of learned authors, but in a free, unimportant, natural, easy manner, diverting others just as we diverted ourselves. <sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 88: Pope to Swift, Nov. 17, 1726.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 94: Pope to Swift, Feb. 18, 1727.

<sup>55</sup> Supra, p. 33, n. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 94: Pope to Swift, Feb. 18, 1727.

Such was Pope's conception of their friendship in action at its very height.

Pope's personal manner as a host again sheds some light on their relationship in 1727. During this visit neither Pope nor Swift was in good health, and the Dean was a particularly difficult person to get along with when he was ill, as he readily admitted.<sup>57</sup> At any rate, this visit was not nearly as pleasant as it might have been, and Swift's sudden departure from Twickenham was occasioned as much by Pope's insistent solit-  
citude<sup>58</sup> as by the shocking news of Stella's illness which so upset the Dean.<sup>59</sup> Swift abruptly left the poet's home, and remained a few days in London before he returned to Ireland. He left a letter for Pope with Gay which has been lost, but which, judging from Pope's reply,<sup>60</sup> thanked him for his care during his illness at Twickenham, and made excuses for his hasty departure.

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<sup>57</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 224: Swift to Pope, April 20, 1731.

<sup>58</sup> Ball, op. cit., III, 416: Swift to Sheridan, Sept 2, 1727;

I came to town on the last day of August, being impatient of staying there any longer, where so much company came to us while I was giddy and deaf.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 415: Swift to Sheridan, August 29, 1727:

I have had your letter of the 19th, and expect, before you read this, to receive another from you with the most fatal news that can ever come to me, unless I should be put to death for some ignominious crime. [He refers to Stella's death.]

<sup>60</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 98: Pope to Swift, Oct. 2, 1727.

I would very fain know, as soon as you recover from your complaints, or any part of them. Would to God I could ease any of them, or had been able to have alleviated any! I found I was not, and truly it grieved me. I was sorry to find you could think yourself easier in any house than in mine . . . To your bad health I fear there was added some disagreeable news from Ireland which might occasion your so sudden departure. <sup>61</sup>

Pope's letter shows that he was aware that his civilities fretted Swift, that his too-constant attention annoyed Swift. Further, he admits that he had tried not to be so attentive, and he is very sorry if he failed.

Swift's answer is extremely sincere, but not completely truthful. He reduces the whole question of his departure to their illnesses, and particularly to his own inability to get along with anyone but menials when his attacks of giddiness and deafness occurred:

. . . and if you ever made me angry, it was for your too much care about me.

. . . . .

I find it more convenient to be sick here, without the vexation of making my friends uneasy; yet my giddiness alone would not have done, if that unsocial, comfortless deafness had not quite tired me. . . . But it has pleased God that you are not in a state of health to be mortified with the care and sickness of a friend. Two sick friends never did get well together; such an office is fitter for servants and humble companions, to whom it is wholly indifferent whether we give them trouble or no. <sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 98: Pope to Swift, Oct. 2, 1727.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 100: Swift to Pope, Oct. 12, 1727.

There is no mention whatsoever of Stella, or the news he had received of her illness. Pope's tactfully worded suggestion of "some disagreeable news from Ireland" as having some bearing on his departure was ignored by Swift, who tried to banish any such ideas from Pope's mind by explaining: "I had another reason for my haste hither, which was changing my agent, the old one having terribly involved my little affairs."<sup>63</sup>

Whether Swift was thoroughly disgusted with himself, Pope, and everyone else because of his illness or not, whatever the case, the most important reason for his hasty departure, and the most personal one, is not mentioned in these letters; that is, that he had received news from Sheridan that Stella was very ill and in danger of death.<sup>64</sup> Evidently, Swift did not know that Sheridan had also written Pope in September, telling him that a "particular friend of the Dean's" was "on the brink of another world."<sup>65</sup> Swift preferred to treat the matter of his leaving as a result of his illness and his own short-comings. Since he makes no mention of any other cause than his own state of health, it would seem that he had never mentioned his relationship to Stella, at least in any detail, to Pope, and that he was not aware that Pope had any inkling of this factor.

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<sup>63</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 100: Swift to Pope, Oct. 12, 1727.

<sup>64</sup> Supra, p. 52, n. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 97: Sheridan to Pope, September, 1727.

Pope's very carefully veiled reference to the contents of the communication he had received from Sheridan supports this conclusion. While it indicates his respect for Sheridan's confidence, it also indicates that he was wary of letting Swift know that he knew anything at all about Stella. When his hint of such knowledge was ignored by Swift, Pope let the matter drop, and it never again enters the correspondence. From this incident we can judge that Swift and Pope were not such good friends that Swift was willing to discuss with Pope his relationship with Stella; that, in their discussions, visits, conversations, and letters she had no existence whatsoever.

How much importance may be attached to this fact is debatable. Swift's relationship with Stella has always been a mystery, and the fact that he did not reveal it to Pope may not be important at all. Ricardo Quintana observes that: "Arbuthnot, Gay, and Pope knew little of Stella,"<sup>66</sup> and another biographer adds in the same vein, "she was no more than a name to his London friends."<sup>67</sup> His silence here with Pope is almost too negative an aspect to be especially illuminating, and yet, it does set some rather definite boundaries to their relationship by aiding us to measure its extent as well as its nature.

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66 Quintana, op. cit., p. 224.

67 Newman, op. cit., p. 330.

Cf. Stephen, op. cit., p. 203.



We shall note in our study that a respect for the personal idiosyncrasies and attitudes of the other will, in a way, characterize this relationship and make it possible. Pope's adroit handling of this situation is a good manifestation of this phenomenon.

Throughout the rest of the correspondence Swift makes many remarks about the way he feels when he is ill. That he could not bear to have his friends see him in such a state is obvious. Indeed, it would seem that Swift was relieved to be in Ireland rather than among those whom he had known in the more successful and happier days of his career in London just because of his illness.

I have been long reasoning with myself upon the condition I am in, and in conclusion have thought it best to return to what fortune has made my home; I have there a large house, and servants, and conveniences about me. I may be worse than I am, and have nowhere to retire. I therefore thought it best to return to Ireland, rather than to go to any distant place in England. . . . If it pleases God to restore me to my health, I shall readily make a third journey. <sup>68</sup>

His health, personal reasons, and general necessity have made him, more or less, resigned to his "exile".

We have mentioned in a general way that the physical disabilities of both men provided a basis for mutual sympathy and understanding, which could not have existed between them if

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<sup>68</sup> Elwin-Courthope. op. cit., VII, 100: Swift to Pope, Oct. 12, 1727.

either had been perfectly healthy.<sup>69</sup> Almost every letter from either Swift or Pope contains some reference to the health of the writer, or some question concerning the health of the other. Few letters lack a passage expressing sympathy, and the following excerpts from two of Pope's letters are typical:

[1] I have been in a worse condition of health than ever, and think my immortality is very near out of my enjoyment: so it must be in you, and in posterity, to make me what amends you can for dying young. Adieu. While I am, I am yours . . . <sup>70</sup>

[2] . . . for you are the friend I have left whom I am most grieved about. Death has not done worse to me in separating poor Gay, or any other, than disease and absence in dividing us. I am afraid to know how you do, since most accounts give me pain for you . . . <sup>71</sup>

And those of Swift are similar and as frequent:

[1] . . . this disorder neither hinders my sleeping, nor much my walking, yet is the most mortifying malady I can suffer. I have been just a month in town, and have got rid of it in a fortnight, and, when it is on me, I have neither spirits to write, or read, or think, or eat. <sup>72</sup>

[2] I must needs confess, that the pleasure I take in thinking on you is very much lessened by the pain I am in about your health. You pay dearly for the great talents God has given you, and for the consequences of them in the esteem and distinction you receive from mankind, unless you can provide a tolerable stock of health. <sup>73</sup>

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69 Supra, p. 34.

70 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 113: Pope to Swift, Feb. 15, 1728.

71 Ibid., p. 323: Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734.

72 Ibid., p. 142: Swift to Pope, March 6, 1729.

73 Ibid., p. 72: Swift to Pope, August 1726.

Indeed, Pope is so conscious of the confidences they share in regard to their health, that he looks upon the fact that Swift complains to him as a compliment,<sup>74</sup> and as evidence of the extent of their friendship.<sup>75</sup> Swift felt exactly the same way, for, when Pope neglected to mention his own illnesses for awhile, he reproached him for hiding the state of his health from him:

. . . and yet in your letter there is not a syllable that concerns your health, which I know is always so precarious, and so seldom as it should be. I can walk eight or ten miles a day and ride thirty Irish ones. You cannot ride a mile nor walk two. Will you dare to think that this does not hang on my spirits? <sup>76</sup>

Preoccupation with death, disease, and sickness was an attitude the shared. No doubt the awareness of the difficulties of his friend helped each to bear his own, in addition to being another factor which, like genius, helped to set each off from the rest of the world in the company of the other.

They shared many attitudes, likes, and dislikes. For example, Swift was certain that Pope shared his thriftiness, ". . . he laughs at my precepts of thrift, which I am sure you do not."<sup>77</sup> Mr. Pope's interest in gardening is famous; it was an interest shared by Swift. Not only did he compliment Pope on the

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<sup>74</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 122: Pope to Swift, March 23, 1728.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 349: Pope to Swift, Dec. 30, 1736.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 211: Swift to Pope, Jan. 15, 1731.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 299: Swift to Pope, March 31, 1733.

completion of the subterranean passage to his garden,<sup>78</sup> but Pope praised him for his abilities and interest in gardening.<sup>79</sup> Nor was this interest, which he had acquired early from Temple,<sup>80</sup> a passing one. He had two gardens, and had expended more than six hundred pounds on the one in Dublin. They were equally proud of their accomplishments in this hobby, for Swift wrote: "I suffer peach, and nectarine, and pearweeds to grow in my famous gardeon of Naboth's Vineyard that you have heard me boast of,"<sup>81</sup> and Pope wrote later, "the gardens extend and flourish."<sup>82</sup>

It is a small thing, but a curious example of Pope's personality and of his fondness for his residence at Twickenham, that, in the headings of his letters, he adapts the classical use, by Catullus, of the diminutive to express endearment to English by shortening the spelling of his residence from "Twickenham" to "Twitenham" and, finally, to "Twitnam". The really noteworthy thing here is that, although no mention of this preference in spelling is made in the text of the letters,

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78 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725.

79 Ibid., p. 138: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1728.

80 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 57.

81 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 224: Swift to Pope, April 20, 1731.

82 Ibid., p. 341: Pope to Swift, March 25, 1736.

Swift follows Pope's example and spells it as he prefers.<sup>83</sup> We shall see this consideration for the preference of the other manifested in much more important matters later.

In this chapter we have discussed not only the specific likes and dislikes which the letters reveal Swift and Pope shared, but we have seen the extent of the benefits and obligations included in their friendship. We have seen their friendship in action. Although this discussion of the practical utility of their friendship might conceivably be carried to greater length, it should be obvious that neither man gained too much, in a material, measurable sense, from their friendship. If they were willing to overcome certain of their differences to be friends, the weight of the evidence indicates that they could not have done so out of any hopes to gain by their relationship.

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<sup>83</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 357: Swift to Pope, May 31, 1737.

## CHAPTER III

### FRIENDSHIP AND MISANTHROPY

In Chapter II we saw the friendship of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope in action as a preparation for our investigation of the friendship itself and an understanding of the broader aspects of their relationship. Here we shall concern ourselves, first, with the attitude of both Swift and Pope towards friendship in general, second, with Pope's opinion of Swift as a friend, and, third, with Swift's opinion of Pope as a friend. As in the preceding chapter, our findings will be based upon their letters to each other.

The second part of the chapter will be devoted to the first of the broader aspects which either form a part of, or are revealed by the relationship. We shall see what the letters and their association have to do with the question of misanthropy, an outlook for which Swift, and, to a lesser extent, Pope, is famous.

No mention was made in the previous chapter of the mutual friends and enemies of Swift and Pope. Scattered throughout the correspondence are the names of people they both detested or admired, ranging from such notables as Walpole and the Prince of Wales to men like Curll or young Stopford. These references cover the whole correspondence, and serve as a register of the important, and a few of the unimportant, people of the Augustan Age. Among their mutual friends Ford, Addison, Congreve, Rowe,

Steele, Oxford, Harcourt, Bolingbroke, Peterborough, Stopford, Gay, Disney, Arbuthnot, Berkeley, Windham, Bathurst, Jervas, Lewis, Atterbury, Craggs, Garth, Hutchison, Southern, Hughes, Rundle, Lyttleton, Lord Masham and a few others are mentioned.<sup>1</sup> The Pilkingtons, Curll, Gildon, Burnet, Blackmore, Hopkins, Sternhold, Cibber, Phillips, Walpole, Doddington and the Dunces in general are noticed unfavorably.<sup>2</sup> There is no expressed disagreement about anyone, which tends to support Pope's statement about his purpose in writing the Dunciad:

It was my principal aim in the entire work to perpetuate that friendship between us, and to show that the friends or the enemies of one were the friends or enemies of the other.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem that these two men, who valued friendship so highly, found the same friends in the world. Indeed, Swift did not dissent when Pope wrote, "I have found that all my friends of a later date were such as were yours before."<sup>4</sup> Their mutual respect and love for Dr. John Arbuthnot paralleled the affection they felt for each other, and their friendship with Gay was as deep as it could have been.

There is much discussion in the letters in regard to the nature of friendship in general as well as of their own

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1 See Appendix.

2 See Appendix.

3 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 158: Pope to Swift, Oct. 9, 1729.

4 Ibid., p. 37: Pope to Swift, August, 1723.

friendship in particular. That they both valued friendship highly is evident, for it is an ever re-appearing subject in their letters.<sup>5</sup> In an early letter Swift remarks that he chose his friends "by their personal merit"<sup>6</sup> without regard to their political affiliations; that he was "a common friend to all deserving persons",<sup>7</sup> Whigs or Tories. He maintains this position throughout the correspondence, elaborating it, re-wording it, but it is always the same attitude:

I have often endeavoured to establish a friendship among all men of genius, and would fain have it done. They are seldom above three or four contemporaries, and if they could be united, would drive the world before them.<sup>8</sup>

Pope's view is substantially the same. His "top pleasure is one I learned from you, both how to gain and how to use the freedoms of friendship with men much my superiors."<sup>9</sup> His references to true friendship between worthy men are almost invariably accompanied by some reference to the Dunces, men incapable of friendship. For example:

As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of this life, so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels, which I cannot but own to you was one part of my design in falling upon these authors, whose

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5 Newman, op. cit., p. 167.

6 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

7 Loc. cit.

8 Ibid., p. 44: Swift to Pope: Sept. 20, 1723.

9 Ibid., p. 37: Pope to Swift, August, 1723.



incapacity is not greater than their insincerity, and of whom I have always found, if I may quote myself,

That each bad author is as bad a friend.<sup>10</sup>

Friendship, then, was not only valuable, it was holy; it could only be bestowed upon worthy people. No clearer statement of this attitude is available than Swift's:

Your notions of friendship are new to me; I believe every man is born with his quantum [italics in original] and he cannot give to one without robbing another. I very well know to whom I would give the first places in my friendship, but they are not in the way. I am condemned to another scene, and therefore I distribute it in pennyworths to those about me, and who displease me least, and should do the same to my fellow prisoners, if I were condemned to jail.<sup>11</sup>

Such an attitude makes friendship a rich treasure, and his conduct, all through his life, indicates that Jonathan Swift quite sincerely meant what he said.<sup>12</sup>

Pope is in full agreement with this exclusive, highly restrictive attitude towards friendship. It is the basis for his belief that:

. . . great geniuses must and do esteem one another, and I question if any other man can esteem or comprehend uncommon merit. Others only guess at that merit, or see glimmerings of their minds. A genius has the intuitive faculty. . . .<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 122: Pope to Swift, March 23, 1728.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 44: Swift to Pope, Sept. 20, 1723.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen L. Gwynn, "Pope and Swift", Masters of English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1904), p. 174: "In a sense Jonathan Swift is the most social figure of his time. He had a genius for friendship."

<sup>13</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 345: Pope to Swift, August 17, 1736.

It is the foundation for his love and admiration of Swift, Gay, Bolingbroke, and Arbuthnot.

In general, then, they concurred in the belief that one of the most important things for a man of genius and taste was true friendship. This common belief was stated by Swift: "I am so far of your opinion that life is good for nothing otherwise than for the love we have to our friends,"<sup>14</sup> and Pope re-echoed it: "Nothing is valuable in this world but sense and friendship."<sup>15</sup> An understanding of this mutual idealization of friendship and its value will make the willingness and ability of Pope and Swift to overcome their various differences easier to understand.

Pope's first comments on Swift as a friend are in recognition of his kind and charitable nature,<sup>16</sup> and his second letter sets the tone of his attitude for the future:

If I writ this in verse, I would tell you, you are like the sun, and while men imagine you to be retired or absent, are hourly exerting your indulgence, and bringing things to maturity for their advantage. Of all the world, you are the man, without flattery, who serve your friends with the least ostentation; it is almost ingratitude to thank you.<sup>17</sup>

Pope's letters express an attitude of personal respect and

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14 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 81: Swift to Pope, Oct. 15, 1726.

15 Ibid., p. 317: Pope to Swift, Jan. 6, 1734.

16 Ibid., p. 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

17 Ibid., p. 7: Pope to Swift, June 18, 1714.

admiration, not of any acquired characteristics like political sagacity or literary ability, but of Swift's natural character and moral qualities. Each letter has some passage affirming the deep personal love Pope bears for him. These declarations of friendship are so personal, so repeated, and so variously worded that almost any letter could stand alone as evidence of their friendship regardless of whatever else it might contain. For purposes of clarification, excerpts from three letters from Pope to Swift, one in the first part, one in the middle, and one in the later stages of their correspondence will be presented:

It is an honest truth there is no one living or dead, of whom I think of oftener or better than yourself. I look upon you to be as to me in a state between them both. You have from me all the passions and good wishes that can attend the living, and all the respect and tender sense of loss that we feel for the dead. <sup>18</sup>

Soon after Swift's second visit he wrote:

At all adventures, yours and my name shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and prose, and, as Tully says, in *consuetudine studiorum* [*italics in original*]. Would to God our persons could but as well and as surely be inseparable! <sup>19</sup>

And in the later days of their friendship he wrote:

. . . if I am in any part of my constitution younger than you, it will be in my remembering everything that has pleased me in you, longer than perhaps you will. The two summers we passed together dwell always on my mind, like a vision which

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<sup>18</sup> Elwin-Courthope, *op. cit.*, VII, 37: Pope to Swift, August, 1723.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122: Pope to Swift, March 23, 1728.

gave me a glimpse of a better life and better company than the world otherwise afforded.<sup>20</sup>

Such are the sentiments he expressed, over and over again, throughout the long years of their correspondence.

Swift's admiration of Pope, too, was most concerned with his personal character,<sup>21</sup> for he says of him, "You are a man of virtue, and therefore must abhor vice and corruption, although your discretion holds the reins."<sup>22</sup> His admiration of Pope's character was unrestrained;<sup>23</sup> he considered him to be the most generous and charitable person,<sup>24</sup> and the "most dutiful son"<sup>25</sup> he had

<sup>20</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 329: Pope to Swift, Dec. 19, 1734.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 69: Swift to Pope, August 4, 1726: " . . . because I love and esteem you for reasons most others have little to do with."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 333: Swift to Pope, Sept. 3, 1735.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 131: Swift to Pope, June 1, 1728:

I will take my oath that you have more virtue in an hour, than I in seven years, for you despise the follies and hate the vices of mankind, without the least ill effect on your temper; and with regard to particular men you are inclined always rather to think the better, whereas with me it is directly contrary.

Cf., p. 151: Swift to Pope, August, 1729: "For I never yet knew any person one tenth part so heartily disposed as you to do good offices without the least private view."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 307: Swift to Pope, May 1, 1733:

Of all men living you are the happiest in your enemies and friends; and I will swear you have fifty times more charity for mankind than I could ever pretend to . . .

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 312: Swift to Pope, July 8, 1733.

ever known. The references in his letters to the importance and the beauty of their personal friendship, and his intense feeling for his friend are as many and as varied as those of Pope.<sup>26</sup> He is equally interested in posterity's recognition of their mutual relationship, although he is a little more realistic than Pope:

To be remembered forever on account of our friendship, is what would exceedingly please me. . . . I no sooner writ this than I corrected myself, and remembered Sir Fulke Greville's epitaph, Here lies, etc., who was friend to Sir Philip Sidney. And therefore I most heartily thank you for your desire that I would record our friendship in verse . . .<sup>27</sup>

Out of the many statements and professions of friendship made by both men in the letters, there are two, one by Swift and one by Pope, which are especially illustrative of their personal attitude toward each other as friends. These two passages are forceful because the circumstances which elicited them were most conducive to a simple and honest testimonial of affection, and, in contrast to many others, the style and sentiments of these seem least affected.

In 1727 Jonathan Swift finally resigned himself to the fact that he had to spend the rest of his days in Ireland.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 72: Swift to Pope, August, 1726.

Cf., p. 331: Swift to Pope, May 12, 1735; p. 357: Swift to Pope, May 31, 1737.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 146: Swift to Pope, April 5, 1729.

<sup>28</sup> Supra, p. 56.

With this resignation he was able to realize that he would never again occupy the position of a leader in the world of wit and fashion, that he might never again see his closest and most intimate friends. From that empty world he wrote to Pope: "You are the best and kindest friend in the world, and I know nobody alive or dead to whom I am so much obliged."<sup>29</sup>

Five years later, in 1732, the world of Alexander Pope seemed very empty too. The sudden and unexpected death of his very good friend, Gay, made him keenly aware of the shortening circle of his friends, and the fast approach of death. The terseness and brevity of the sentiment expressed in his letter to Swift at this time makes it impossible to doubt its sincerity: "I believe no man now living loves you better, I believe no man ever did, than Alexander Pope."<sup>30</sup>

Thus far the correspondence has revealed the existence of a real friendship between Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, real since it could not have been founded upon hopes for services or gains of a material, measurable kind. Our investigation has shown them to be, at least to each other and to their mutual friends, men whom it would be a pleasure to know. This is hardly the popular concept of either figure, for Swift and Pope stand

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<sup>29</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 100: Swift to Pope, Oct. 12, 1727.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 291: Pope to Swift, Dec. 5, 1732.

as symbols of a directly opposite type of person. There is certainly something paradoxical and incongruous between the asocial character of their reputations and the sociability our study has revealed. To reconcile the difference we shall examine their social and philosophical outlook as it is revealed, or, at least, as it is professed, in the letters. We shall note what personal attitudes they discuss and seem to share in their correspondence without reference to philosophical systems like Deism, or the accepted social code of the eighteenth century.

Almost the first thing one associates with the name, even, of Swift is an attitude of misanthropy; one cannot very easily think of Pope without thinking of satire, and his violent attacks in verse upon his enemies. Such judgements derive ultimately from the famous works of these two men. One sees Gulliver's Travels as Swift's attack upon humanity, the effect or result of his misanthropy, and Pope's Dunciad as his attack on some rather inconsequential people, the effect of his personal hatreds. Hardly the products of reflection, these generalizations have enough truth in them to be useful and misleading. Vague as they are, they enable us to recognize a certain amount of truth in statements like Mr. S. L. Gwynn's:

And he Pope differs from other satirists, but above all from the greatest, Swift, in that his hatred was not for principles but for persons, not for man or men, but this or that man.<sup>31</sup>

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31 Stephen L. Gwynn, "Pope and Swift," Masters of English Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1904), p. 182.

Because of the mystery surrounding these men critics have been satisfied with these answers. Only recently have scholars like Ricardo Quintana in the case of Swift,<sup>32</sup> and George Sherburn in the case of Pope,<sup>33</sup> tried to integrate the biographical facts and the intellectual milieu of these two men into their literary work in an effort to understand both.

Before one accepts Swift as the symbol of hatred-of-humanity, and Pope as the representative in literature of wounded vindictiveness, one must account in some way for the fact, especially corroborated by our study of their letters, that Swift and Pope moved, all their lives, at the very apex of the social world. Each was as much embroiled in the affairs of his respective world as any man could have been. A proper reconciliation of these two positions must be made before any accurate estimation of the work of either man may be attempted.

On the basis of the general conception of Swift and Pope it might appear that they were friends because they had to be. It might seem that Swift hated the world so much, and Pope the writers in London so much, that their very hatreds drove them together, or that, since they stood alone, they might as well

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32 Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 398.

33 George W. Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 326.



stand together. As appealing as this line of reasoning might be, it will not stand the application of biographical facts.

How strictly Swift's misanthropy was confined to his imagination; how it was not in the least allowed to affect his relations with the individual men and women of which humanity was composed; how its more perverse manifestations were never allowed to appear in word or deed; how his philanthropic activities increased rather than diminished as he grew older -- all this is obvious. None the less, the contrast between Swift's inner and outer life is sufficiently extraordinary.<sup>34</sup>

At the outset, then, without attempting to define the nature, quality, or extent of their misanthropy, we can see that it was an attitude which, as such, did not have too much to do with their personal relationship except to mark another of their similarities. However, an understanding of this aspect of their association, which the letters afford, will render this phenomenon less extraordinary and provide a deeper appreciation of the work of Swift and Pope.

The characteristic form which their misanthropic outlook took was a distaste of the world and its ways in general, and of its ugly and irrational aspects in particular. Early in the letters Swift wrote:

It is true, I have been much concerned, for several years past, upon account of the public as well as of myself, to see how ill a taste for wit and sense prevails in the world, which politics and South Sea, and party, and operas, and masquerades have introduced.<sup>35</sup>

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34 Newman, op. cit., pp. 301-302.

35 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

These activities were manifestations of enthusiasm which Swift deplored.<sup>36</sup> For him, there were two groups, the mass and the elite, the enlightened men of taste; it was the function of the former to follow, and of the latter, through taste, to lead.<sup>37</sup> Only his equalitarianism, a necessary corollary of his belief that reason was the same in all men, restrained this theory.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, his expressions of contempt for the world were usually expressed more forcefully:

Drown the world! I am not content with despising it, but I would anger it, if I could with safety. I wish there were a hospital built for its despisers, where one might act with safety, and it need not be a large building, only I would have it well endowed.<sup>39</sup>

This is characteristic of Swift's expression and it matches Pope's very well:

. . . this world is made for Caesar, as Cato said, for ambitious, false, or flattering people to domineer in; nay they would not, by their good will, leave us our very books, thoughts, or words, in quiet. I despise the world yet, I assure you, more than either Gay or you, and the court more than all the rest of the world.<sup>40</sup>

The references throughout the correspondence to the necessity of private virtue, and to the absolute necessity for

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36 Quintana, op. cit., p. 51.

37 Ibid., p. 57.

38 Ibid., p. 54.

39 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 61: Swift to Pope, Nov. 26, 1725.

40 Ibid., p. 122; Pope to Swift, March 23, 1728.

a man of virtue and genius to detest the world and the mass are frequent, and Pope's attitude as expressed in his letter of April, 1733, is typical:

If there be any virtue in England, I would try to stir it up in your behalf, but it dwells not with power. It is got into so narrow a circle, that it is hard, very hard, to know where to look for it. <sup>41</sup>

And the evils of society were never forgotten:

. . . this condition of things, both public and personal to myself, has given me such a kind of despondency, that I am <sup>42</sup> almost unqualified for any company, diversion, or amusement.

From these passages alone we can see the similarity of their outlooks on this question of misanthropy, but the letters provide far more convincing evidence.

The discussion of misanthropy in the correspondence is key-noted by Swift. He defines his position in a passage that is justly famous and lays down the principle of what may be called a love of individuals, of this or that man, and a hatred of the mass, of men. Further, he calls upon his friends to agree with him:

I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is toward individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-One, and Judge Such-a-One; so with physicians -- I will not speak of my own trade -- soldiers, English, Dutch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so

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<sup>41</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 191: Pope to Swift, April 9, 1730.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 331: Swift to Pope, May 12, 1735.

forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years, but do not tell, and so I shall go on till I have done with them . . . and I never will have peace of mind until all honest men are of my opinion. By consequence you are to embrace it immediately, and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit of no dispute; nay, I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point. <sup>43</sup>

Pope, in his answer, almost too conveniently, affirms categorically his agreement. He even elaborates the principle slightly by showing what appears to him to be the absolute necessity of holding it, for he regards it as a positive duty rather than as a mere belief:

. . . for I really enter as fully as you can desire into your principle of love of individuals: and I think the way to have a public spirit is first to have a private one; for who can believe, said a friend of mine, that any man can care for a hundred thousand people who never cared for one. No <sup>44</sup> ill humored man can ever be a patriot any more than a friend.

Nearly every letter contains some passage which could be interpreted as a substantiation of this attitude. It is basic in everything either Swift or Pope does. It elucidates and explains their controlling ideas in literature, criticism, politics, and friendship. It enters into every phase of their relationship. Nevertheless, we must call the whole thing into question. How much of this misanthropy was real, and how much of it was affectation?

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<sup>43</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 56: Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725.

There can be little doubt that the evils of the world aroused the moralist in Swift, but was the form of misanthropy in which he cloaked his ire its natural garment? It is possible that Swift wanted us to think so. Certainly we have obliged him, if he did.

He preferred to show himself in a repellant character -- he had a singular knack of "putting his worst foot foremost." Bolingbroke, with customary insight, said of him that "Dr. Swift was a hypocrite reversed." . . . One must turn to the letters to see the champion with his armor off. . . .<sup>45</sup>

And more than one critic has noticed the importance of the letters: "He always appeared to the world in a mask which he never took off but in the company of his most intimate friends."<sup>46</sup>

But could a man in the Augustan Age react to social evils and injustices in the same fashion as social protest writers of a later period? As a result of his education, Swift was "steeped in seventeenth century philosophy;"<sup>47</sup> he was untouched "by philosophical humanitarianism, yet the misery he beheld filled him with rage and pity."<sup>48</sup> When we consider his position, the mask of misanthropy becomes even more natural:

A public man, indeed, he always was in the whole cast of his mind; his standpoint was that of a social critic and a

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45 Reginald B. Johnson, Eighteenth Century Letters (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1898), I, p. x.

46 Newman, op. cit., p. 68.

47 Quintana, op. cit., p. 256.

48 Quintana, loc. cit.

social reformer; his interest comprised every aspect of society . . . his terrible animosities were, in the main, excited by the public conduct of his victims.<sup>49</sup>

And Pope? What attitude could more reasonably serve to satisfy a man universally recognized as one of taste, wit, and genius, and yet subject from birth to persecution and discrimination because of religious and physical disabilities than a lofty disdain of the world and its ways in general? Narrowed to its particular application, what attitude could be more natural than his detestation of the hack writers of his time as representatives of the stupidity, the irrationality that had caused him so much pain and difficulty? "Oh, if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots," wrote Swift, "I would burn my Travels."<sup>50</sup> And Pope might never have written the Dunciad, but as Shane Leslie has observed, "For the lack of one Arbuthnot God burned Sodom."<sup>51</sup>

Yet, it was fashionable to pose as a misanthrope, for even Arbuthnot posed as one:

Here is Arbuthnot yet living, recovered from the jaws of death, and more pleased with the hope of seeing you again than of reviewing a world he has long despised every part of [*italics not in original*] but what is made up of a few men like yourself.<sup>52</sup>

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49 Newman, op. cit., p. 198.

50 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725.

51 Shane Leslie, The Skull of Swift (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), p. 226.

52 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 56: Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725.

Bolingbroke, too, had at least feigned misanthropy:

Pray tell my Lord Bolingbroke that I wish he were banished again, for then I should hear from him, when he was full of philosophy, and talked de contemptu mundi.<sup>53</sup>

From this we may judge that it was at least an attitude which no man of wit could forsake. It was certainly not peculiar to Swift and Pope alone.

This view gains further significance in the light of the correspondence, for Pope discussed their common outlook and their mutual friends' reactions to it:

So much for enemies, now for friends. Lewis thinks all this [their misanthropy] very indiscreet; the Doctor <sup>54</sup> not so; he loves mischief the best of any good-natured man in England. Lord Bolingbroke is above trifling; he is grown a great divine. <sup>55</sup>

What is the force of the words "mischief" and "trifling" here? Do they not seem to indicate that the whole thing might have been a convenient pose, at least to Pope? If so, he could not have regarded Swift as being a true or real misanthrope.

Indeed, in the very letter in which Swift defines his misanthropy, he confesses that he has "lost that hardness of heart contracted by years and general conversation,"<sup>56</sup> and later

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<sup>53</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 61: Swift to Pope, Nov. 26, 1725.

<sup>54</sup> Arbuthnot.

<sup>55</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 65: Pope to Swift, Dec. 14, 1725.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1729.

writes: "Years have not hardened me."<sup>57</sup> Pope, too, throw off his misanthropic outlook occasionally:

The merry vein you knew me in is sunk into a turn of reflection, that has made the world pretty indifferent to me; and yet I have acquired a quietness of mind, which by fits improves into a certain degree of cheerfulness, enough to make me just so good-humoured as to wish the world well.<sup>58</sup>

Although the Dunciad had been revised twice by 1730, he was able to write Swift concerning his Essay on Man: "Yet am I just now writing, or rather planning, a book to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in good humour."<sup>59</sup>

This investigation of the letters has enabled us to see that the misanthropy of Swift and Pope was a fashionable attitude in their time, one which they carried to greater extremes than their contemporaries because to do so suited their particular personalities. Whether it was sincere or not, it was too convenient an attitude for either to discard; we find them, throughout the rest of the correspondence and their lives, explaining their actions and rationalizing their feelings in terms of an intense misanthropy. They misinterpreted or ignored Bolingbroke's analysis of their conduct when he himself told them:

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<sup>57</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 140: Swift to Pope, Feb. 13, 1729.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 57: Pope to Swift, August, 1723.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 198: Pope to Swift, June, 1730.



Pope and you are very great wits, and I think very indifferent philosophers. If you despised the world as much as you pretend, and perhaps believe, you would not be so angry with it. 60

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60 Ball, op. cit., III, 296: Bolingbroke to Swift, Dec. 14, 1725.

## CHAPTER IV

### RELIGION, POLITICS, AND PHILOSOPHY

The personal relationship evidenced in the correspondence of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope is one of friendship and similarity. Yet no two figures seem, on the surface, less friendly or less similar. Indeed, our investigation has shown these men in an aspect which is seldom emphasized; it might appear that we are ignoring the difficulties and differences they had in an effort to support a thesis. After all, was not Swift an Anglican minister? Did he not, as has been maintained,<sup>1</sup> despise Roman Catholics, those who professed the same religion as Alexander Pope? Was he not a politician and a journalist, and were not these professions despised by Pope? Did they not disagree in their attitudes towards speculative philosophy if not towards misanthropy? These, too, are biographical facts which must be treated before any real relationship between these two men may be admitted.

The most basic relationship which existed between them was one of friendship. With this defined and settled, we may examine the other aspects of their relationship in an intelligent manner. There were certain personal differences between

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen L. Gwynn, The Life and Friendships of Jonathan Swift (London: Butterworth, 1933), p. 21.

them of which religion, politics, and philosophy are the most pronounced. These formed an integral part of their relationship. We must understand how they entered into it, before we can understand it fully.

Therefore, this chapter will deal with these broader aspects of their association. The method will be the same as in the previous chapters, that is, we shall examine the text of the letters themselves to see what they reveal about these problems.

Clearly, some truce between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism, represented in the persons of the Papist poet and the Anglican divine, had to be arranged in this age of emphasis on uniformity of religious belief before Swift and Pope could ever be fast friends. The very first letter of the correspondence which we have brings the problem of their religious differences into discussion, for the letter is concerned with little else:

Not to trouble you at present with a recital of all my obligations to you, I shall only mention two things, which I take particularly kind of you -- your desire that I should write to you, and your proposal of giving me twenty guineas to change my religion, which last you must give me leave to make the subject of this letter.<sup>2</sup>

Pope's letter is long, and carefully written. It is, however, very important as a statement of his religious attitude and will be outlined here as basic in our study.

Pope displays his abilities as a man of wit in the

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<sup>2</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

paragraph which opens the discussion. He professes amazement at the large sum which Swift is willing to pay for his conversion: "I believe," he writes, "it will be better worth my while to propose a change of my faith by subscription than a translation of Homer."<sup>3</sup> He develops this parallel and says: "But, if you can move every man in the Government who has above ten thousand pounds a year, to subscribe as much as yourself, I shall become a convert." He adapts this manifest impossibility neatly to his now expanding allusion:

I know they have the truth of religion as much at heart, that they would certainly give more to have one good subject translated [*italics not in original*] from Popery to the Church of England, than twenty heathenish authors out of any known tongue into ours.<sup>4</sup>

Having clearly established the firmness of his position, Pope continues the discussion by showing how easily, indeed, the conversion could be accomplished:

I therefore commission you, Mr. Dean, with full authority to transact this affair in my name, and to propose as follows. First, that as to the head of our Church, the Pope, I may engage to renounce his power, whensoever I shall receive any particular indulgences from the head of your church, the Queen. As to communion in one kind, I shall also promise to change it for communion in both, as soon as the Ministry will allow me. For invocations to saints, mine shall be turned to dedications to sinners, when I shall find the great ones of this world as willing to do me any good, as I believe those of the other are.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

4 Loc. cit.

5 Loc. cit.

This is politics as well as religion, and Swift was a politician as well as a divine. Pope, too, knew how to write a letter. This one is certainly aimed at the capacity of the person to whom it is addressed. He has clearly shown Swift that he has no thought of becoming a convert, and he devotes the rest of his letter, over eight hundred more words, to a satirical exposition of the one doctrine which he feels he could not give up after his "translation", that is, prayer for the dead. He points out that there are souls he wishes saved as well as his own, and that the cost of redeeming these souls would, of course, have to be included in the subscription taken up for his conversion. He remarks that it is unfortunate that most of the souls he is concerned for were "heretics, schismatics, poets, painters, or persons of such lives and manners, as few or no churches are willing to save."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the expense will be quite high. "No poet was ever saved under some hundreds of Masses";<sup>7</sup>

I cannot set his Dryden's delivery from Purgatory at less than fifty pounds sterling. Walsh was not only a Socinian, but . . . a Whig. He cannot moderately be rated at less than a hundred. L'Estrange, being a Tory, we compute him but at twenty pounds. . . . All this together amounts to one hundred and seventy pounds.<sup>8</sup>

But this is not all. Mr. Pope has friends yet living whom he

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6 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

7 Loc. cit.

8 Loc. cit.

he expects to die soon, and he will need "some hundred pounds"<sup>9</sup> to have these saved too.

There is more Horace in this satire of Pope than in the Dunciad. He completes it masterfully:

There is but one more whose salvation I insist upon, and then I have done: but indeed it may prove of so much greater charge than all the rest, that I will only lay the course before you and the Ministry, and leave to their prudence and generosity what sum they shall think fit to bestow upon it. The person I mean is Dr. Swift, a dignified clergyman, who, by his own confession, has composed more libels than sermons. If it be true, what I have heard often affirmed by innocent people, that too much wit is dangerous to salvation, this unfortunate gentleman must certainly be damned to all eternity.<sup>10</sup>

Thus did Pope define the place of his religion in their mutual relationship.

At this very early date in the correspondence, then, we can see that Swift and Pope had reached that degree of understanding in which each was able to tolerate, to some extent, the other's religious belief, but in which neither was able to forget their differences. Swift considered himself to be tolerant of dissenters,<sup>11</sup> and, although the beliefs of professed Catholics in an age of civil and political persecution must have been strong,

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<sup>9</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 337: Swift to Pope, Feb. 7, 1736.

Cf. Quintana, op. cit., p. 141.

Pope was able to treat their religious differences lightly. Thus, a truce was established.

In the next letter, Pope is still aware of the difficulty, although only a small portion of the letter, one sentence, is devoted to it:

The gentlemen of the Roman Catholic persuasion are not unwilling to credit me, when I whisper that you are gone to meet some Jesuits commissioned from the Court of Rome in order to settle the most convenient methods to be taken for the coming of the Pretender. <sup>12</sup>

Swift felt very strongly on this point. <sup>13</sup>He was in retirement at Letcombe in Berkshire awaiting the inevitable catastrophe which would follow the failure of his attempted reconciliation between Oxford and Bolingbroke. <sup>14</sup>It was a very dark hour in the life of Jonathan Swift, and Pope's purpose in this passage can only be to provoke his addressee, mildly, but defensively. Religious difference is still a barrier in their relationship although the truce has been established.

In his answer Swift ignores the question of religion completely. The effect of Pope's letters was to put him in such a position that he was forced to regard Pope's Catholicism as

<sup>12</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 7: Pope to Swift, June 18, 1714.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722: "I always declared myself against a Popish successor to the crown, whatever title he might have by the proximity of blood."

<sup>14</sup> Stephen, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

unimportant. As friendly as they must have been in London, Pope is not quite sure where he and Swift stand in regard to this question. He skillfully avoided a quarrel without compromising his own position for the purpose of maintaining their friendship.

Pope's next letter shows us the terms of the agreement they reached over this difficulty:

I look upon a friend in Ireland as upon a friend in the other world, whom, Popishly speaking, I do believe constantly well disposed towards me, and ready to do me all the good he can, in that state of separation, though I hear nothing from him, and make addresses to him but very rarely. A Protestant divine cannot take it amiss that I treat him in the same manner with my patron saint. <sup>16</sup>

He continues to taunt Swift in a good-natured, light manner, and ends his letter with a discussion of the declining condition of Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism in England well aimed to appeal to the exile in Ireland who saw all hope go down with the Tories two years before: <sup>17</sup>

The church of Rome I judge from many modern symptoms, as well as ancient prophecies, to be in a declining condition; that of England will in a short time be scarcely able to maintain her own family; so churches sink so generally as banks in Europe, and for the same reason -- that religion and trade, which were at first open and free, have been reduced into the management of companies, and the roguery of directors. <sup>18</sup>

This shift in attitude marks a sympathy and an understanding, an

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<sup>16</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 12: Pope to Swift, June 20, 1716.

<sup>17</sup> Quintana, op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>18</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 12: Pope to Swift, June 20, 1716.



outgrowth of their common philosophical attitude of misanthropy, which indicates that their religious differences have been settled.

Swift's reply shows that it was settled for him also. Pope's religion is treated lightly, in one sentence, in the way his had been treated. Replying to Pope's allusion that he, in Ireland, was like a "friend in the other world," Swift retorts:

. . . you are an ill Catholic, or a worse geographer, for I can assure you, Ireland is not paradise, and I appeal even to any Spanish divine, whether addresses were ever made to a friend in hell or purgatory. <sup>19</sup>

Differences in religion were no longer a barrier between them.

The subject of religion is never again important in their letters, and it is seldom mentioned. It is obvious that their friendship transcended their religious differences, and that they no longer merely tolerated each other's religious convictions, but, in time, grew to respect the moral and religious life of the other. Indeed, the only passages in Pope's letters throughout the rest of the correspondence which deal with religion refer to the similarity of their positions,<sup>20</sup> or to the time when they will be re-united in heaven.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Swift's attitude is more restricted to this world, and much more definitely

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<sup>19</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 14: Swift to Pope, August 30, 1716.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 317: Pope to Swift, Jan. 6, 1734.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 171: Pope to Swift: Nov. 28, 1729.

expressed. He prayed for Mrs. Pope,<sup>22</sup> and appreciated Pope's praying for him:

Pray God reward you for your kind prayers. I believe your prayers will do me more good than those of all the prelates in both kingdoms, or any prelates in Europe. . . . and God preserve you for contributing more to mend the world than the whole pack of modern parsons in a lump.<sup>23</sup>

Later, he called Pope "a Christian . . . wherein hardly one in a million of us heretics can equal you."<sup>24</sup>

We may better understand Swift's attitude towards differences in belief or outlook among friends if we recall his attitude towards friendship. In an early letter to Pope, he stressed his loyalty to his friends in the past, whether they were Whigs or Tories. He pointed out that while he was in power he had tried to procure favors for the following Whigs who were his friends: Addison, Congreve, Rowe, and Steele.<sup>25</sup> His loyalty to his friends was so manifest and open that it became a subject of raillery between himself and the Tory leaders, who told him that he never came to them "without a Whig in my sleeve."<sup>26</sup> Swift felt quite sincerely that his loyalty to his friends transcended all

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<sup>22</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 146: Swift to Pope, April 5, 1729.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 331: Swift to Pope, May 12, 1735.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 337: Swift to Pope, Feb. 7, 1736.

<sup>25</sup> Supra, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

party affiliations. He considered himself to be that kind of person. If we apply this mental attitude as characteristic of Swift's outlook to the question of his reaction to Pope's Catholicism we can see that he must have thought, or wanted to think, that Pope's religion was not important, as far as their friendship was concerned. Once friends, religious and other, let us call them intellectual, differences were unimportant to Jonathan Swift.

As far as Pope is concerned, the vast majority of his friends and acquaintances after the publication of the Iliad were men of the Anglican church. From his birth he had been an outsider, and from the very beginning of his career he had to accept men of the Church of England as his friends, men who must have seldom allowed him to forget his position as a "Papist". How pleasant must have been this relationship with Swift which rose above a common difficulty. Further, it does not appear from his correspondence or his poetry that he was a zealous or "enthusiastic" Catholic. Firm, yes:

And yet you know I am no enemy to the present constitution; I believe as sincere a well-wisher to it, nay even to the Church established, as any minister in or out of employment whatever; or any bishop of England or Ireland. Yet I am of the religion of Erasmus, a Catholic. So I live, so I shall die; and hope one day to meet you . . . in that place, to which God, of his infinite mercy, brings us and everybody.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 171: Pope to Swift, Nov. 28, 1729.

Yet he was unable to see any contradiction between his faith and his philosophical speculations. His religion did not influence his philosophical outlook so as to make it very different from that of his friends, for he seems to have thought and felt much the same way as they did.

These remarks should explain, in part at least, Pope's more obvious consciousness of their religious differences as a possible barrier to their friendship at the beginning of the correspondence. Swift would have dismissed such a thought as unworthy of himself when and if it entered his mind after their preliminary meetings. Pope, because of a different attitude and a far different background, was more afraid that it might cause a breach between them, and, therefore, he made light of the matter by adopting a superior, jesting attitude.

Then, too, this was the age of Reason and Common Sense. "Enthusiasm" or extremes of any sort were considered to be manifestations of vulgarity, and lack of taste. The triumph of Swift and Pope over their differences in religion was equally a triumph of Reason and good Sense:

. . . religion also was brought into harmony with reason and good sense. Though Pope and most of his good friends were professing Christians -- Swift and Parnell were priests of the established Church, and Atterbury, a lord bishop -- there was little fervour in the faith of any of them. Except in the heat of controversy, it is not easy to distinguish between the religion of an orthodox divine such as Swift, and the free-thinking Deists whom he despised. <sup>28</sup>

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28 Robert K. Root, The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), p. 181.

Yet, the position of the fideist is seldom marked by fervour. Jonathan Swift, scholars are agreed, was a sincere clergyman who looked upon the established Church with reverence.<sup>29</sup> "No man of genius was ever more devoted to her, or, according to his own intentions, at any rate, served her more faithfully."<sup>30</sup> Nor was the position of Pope less firm for want of "fervour."

The picture presented by Jonathan Swift, mighty Tory, and Jonathan Swift, sincere minister, might seem to be an incongruous one at first sight. But Swift's political position stems from his religious beliefs, and the two are so closely associated that one must understand both to understand either one. Neither Swift nor his contemporaries saw any contradiction between the two professions:

The Church was a natural opening for a man of his sort, especially at a time when the range of choice open to an educated man was far smaller than now . . . The Church, moreover, was very much of a political institution in those days, and was involved in the whole structure of the national life. Ecclesiastical events were political events; ecclesiastical opinions were matters of the gravest public concern; to preserve the national Church from the Pope on the one hand and the Puritans on the other had been the objects of the greatest movements of national policy . . . its bishops were important officers of state; they formed an appreciable part of the House of Lords.<sup>31</sup>

The position of a clergyman in his day, then, would have made it

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29 Quintana, op. cit., p. 72.

30 Newman, op. cit., p. 41.

31 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

possible for him to look upon his political activities as direct service to his church. There was no question of contradiction or incongruity.

Above all, Jonathan Swift was a moralist, "the mightiest moralist in English printing."<sup>32</sup> He was unable to restrain his interest in politics -- at the age of seventy-two, seldom wholly sane, he was still active as a politician.<sup>33</sup> Politics became the natural and easy outlet for his didactic temperament. Behind the huge and impressive figure of the Tory journalist, the Drapier, and Gulliver stands Jonathan Swift, the moralist.

Both he and Pope had begun their public careers as friends of the Whigs, but by 1708 Swift was ready to break with them because of their program of civil toleration for dissenters.<sup>34</sup> He became a Tory because of his position as a Churchman;<sup>35</sup> his break was based upon the passionate conviction that the only hope for the Church and the nation lay with the Tories, a principle which their downfall in 1714, and his subsequent "exile" in Ireland only served to strengthen.<sup>36</sup> Pope, of course, was disbarred by his religion from any active participation in politics as such, but,

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32 Leslie, op. cit., p. 15.

33 Supra, p. 42.

34 Quintana, op. cit., p. 121.

35 Newman, op. cit., p. 131.

36 Quintana, op. cit., p. 212.

by 1713, he had broken with Addison and the "Little Senate," and had come to be associated with the Tories. Nor was this move wholly opportunistic. In general, the Catholics of 1712-13 preferred the Tory party, and Pope was still in touch with the Catholic friends of his youth.

Whether Pope was registered as a Tory or not, the principle that order everywhere, hierarchic gradation, is required by the divine Reason was a fundamental one of the Tories; a fundamental premise for the optimism of the Essay on Man . . . and of course Swift subscribed completely to this idea so that philosophically in this respect they are in perfect accord . . . 38

Thus, we can see in their shifts of political allegiance, independently of each other, another marked similarity in their respective outlooks.

The correspondence indicates that Pope, like Swift, regarded the triumph of the Whigs in much the same way as their friends in the Scriblerus Club:

Rational freedom had gone down in defeat before the forces of darkness; the ministry's subtleties and mystical ways, prevailing over blunt common sense, had played into the enemies' hands; private passions had hastened the catastrophe . . . Great Britain now lay at the mercy of a faction which in a short time would permanently corrupt the will and reason of the people. 39

Every selfish interest in the nation had triumphed, but since Pope had little to gain or lose because of it, his chief

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37 Sherburn, op. cit., p. 125.

38 Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 206.

39 Quintana, op. cit., p. 212.

reactions must have been moulded by those of his closest friends, most of whom were Swift's.<sup>40</sup> His deep respect for Bolingbroke's genius alone<sup>41</sup> would have made it impossible for him to approve of the Whig ministry. Thus, even in addition to his professed misanthropy, we can be certain that Mr. Alexander Pope, member of the Scriblerus Club, friend of Dr. John Arbuthnot, Swift, and Gay, and, later, author of the Dunciad agreed wholeheartedly as he read those passages in Swift's letter which decried the "ill taste for wit prevailing in the world which politics, and South Sea, and party, and operas, and masquerades have introduced."<sup>42</sup>

It is most likely that Pope concurred, in the main, with the political principles of Swift, although he could not engage in politics and even had a contempt for them. "I never had either a taste or talent for politics,"<sup>43</sup> he wrote on one occasion, and, on another, "You used to love what I hate, a hurry of politics, etc."<sup>44</sup>; that is, he agreed, in a more or less abstract fashion, to those principles which were set forth by Swift, and which were not directly anti-Catholic. Swift outlined his political beliefs in a letter to Pope<sup>45</sup> in the following manner:

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40 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 37: Pope to Swift, August, 1723.

41 Ibid., p. 345: Pope to Swift, August 17, 1736.

42 Ibid., p. 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

43 Ibid., p. 261: Pope to Swift, April, 1731

44 Ibid., p. 305: Pope to Swift, April 20, 1735.

45 Ibid., p. 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.



(1) He was always against a Catholic successor to the Crown; he regarded the right line as the one established by law and the opinion of the people. (2) Revolutions are legitimate if prosecuted against a tyrant for the public good. (3) Standing armies in time of peace indicate that the interests of the ruler are separate from those of the people; they are bad because they will eventuate in the subjection and slavery of the people. (4) Annual election of Parliament is the only firm foundation of liberty. (5) Any system of politics in which the moneyed interest is in opposition to the landed is wrong. (6) The suspension of laws designed to protect the innocent, like Habeas Corpus, is unjust. (7) He was firmly opposed to the popular concept "that there is something profound in politics, which men of plain honest sense cannot arrive to."<sup>46</sup> Pope did not record any disagreement. He was not interested in politics, but he found no fault with the speculative concepts underlying these principles, and he liked speculation.

In the first preserved letter from Swift to Pope, the place of politics in their relationship is defined, and it remains basically the same for the rest of their lives. Swift remarks:

. . . you talk at your ease, being wholly unconcerned in public events: for if your friends the Whigs continue, you may hope for some favour; if the Tories return, you are at

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<sup>46</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., p. 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

least sure of quiet. You know how well I loved Lord Oxford and Bolingbroke, and how dear the Duke of Ormond is to me. Do you imagine I can be easy while their enemies are endeavouring to take off their heads: I nunc et versus tecum meditare canoros. Do you imagine I can be easy, when I think of the probable consequences of these proceedings, perhaps upon the very peace of the nation, but certainly of the minds of so many hundred thousand good subjects? <sup>47</sup>

It is quite obvious that Swift, unlike Pope, is not at ease. At this time he is very much concerned with the safety of Bolingbroke and Oxford, and, during the rest of his life, with one political issue or another. He considers Pope very brave and very bold for praising Bolingbroke in the Preface to his Iliad, and he tells him so.<sup>48</sup>

By 1716 it was obvious that Pope was not interested in preferment from his "friends the Whigs", that he was not interested in politics. This proved to Swift, not only his honesty, but his good sense. The friendship had survived another test:

I had the favour of yours by Mr. Ford, of whom, before any other question relating to your health, or fortune, or success as a poet, I inquired your principles in the common form, 'Is he a Whig or a Tory?' I am sorry to find they are not so well tallied to the present juncture as I could wish. I always thought the terms of facto and jure had been introduced by the poets, and that the possession of any sort in kings was held an unexceptionable title in the courts of Parnassus. If you do not grow a perfect good subject in all its present latitudes, I shall conclude you are become rich, and able to live without dedications to men in power, whereby one great inconvenience will follow, that you and the world

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47 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

48 Supra, p. 34.

and posterity will be utterly ignorant of their virtues.<sup>49</sup>

Thus was the pattern set. Pope was not interested in politics, and, if he was not a Tory, he certainly was not a Whig. This was enough for Swift. The voice of the Tories had been silenced in England, but Swift was already in the arena of Irish politics, and, soon the voice of the Drapier would ring louder and clearer than that of the Examiner ever had. In both instances Pope was little more than a spectator cheering his favorite performer on to victory. He considered Swift to be a great patriot,<sup>50</sup> and he wrote: "You are the greatest politician in Europe at this rate."<sup>51</sup> He, himself, remained aloof from politics and appropriated poetry as the outlet for his reforming tendencies and moralizing.

Part of Swift's first letter to Pope in 1715 is concerned with politics, and the subject of politics, in one form or another, finds mention in almost every one of his letters, even up to the last letter in 1739.<sup>52</sup> Pope listened to all this, offered advice, and aided Swift whenever he was asked or able to do so. He kept him advised of the situation in England, reported his visit with Walpole, and sympathized with the difficulties which confronted Swift. He exhorted him to give up politics

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49 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 14: Swift to Pope, August 30, 1716.

50 Ibid., p. 56: Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725.

51 Ibid., p. 86: Pope to Swift, Nov. 26, 1726.

52 Ibid., p. 370: Swift to Pope, May 10, 1739.

because of its effects upon his health, and because of his own attitude towards politics in general. Never once did he condemn those activities in which Swift, himself, was engaged, and he seems to have been genuinely proud of his friend's accomplishments and popularity.

It was fortunate for their friendship that Pope was not and could not be engaged in politics. Because of this, politics never became an issue between them. They each recognized the rank and influence of the other and had the same moral earnestness, but politicians seldom agree, and friendship between them would have been much more difficult if Pope, too, had been active in either party. We can say, then, that their letters reveal a similarity in belief and outlook in regard to principles in politics, but a vast difference in regard to political positions and action which was very beneficial to their personal relationship.

Closely related to the questions of religion and politics is that of philosophy. Our investigation has revealed a coincidence in philosophical outlook between these two men at almost every turn, in misanthropy, in their attitudes towards friendship, religion, ethics, and politics, and yet there was a very marked difference in their attitudes toward speculative philosophy or philosophical enquiry. Pope considered himself to be a philosopher, and he was extremely interested in metaphysical speculation. Swift, on the other hand, had little use for such pursuits. This is analogous to their respective attitudes towards politics, with the positions reversed.

Pope gravely announced the following reason for publishing the Essay on Man anonymously:

. . . the design of concealing myself was good, and had the full effect. I was thought a divine, a philosopher, and what not, and my doctrine had a sanction I could not have given it. Whether I can proceed in the same grave march like Lucretius, or must descend to the gaities of Horace, I know not, or whether I can do either.<sup>53</sup>

To obviate any criticism or serious retorts from Swift he pleads later in the letter:

I have only one piece of mercy to beg of you; do not laugh at my gravity, but permit me to wear the beard of a philosopher, till I pull it off, and make a jest of it myself. It is just what my Lord Bolingbroke is doing with metaphysics. I hope you will live to see, and stare at the learned figure he will make, on the same shelf, with Locke and Malebranche.<sup>54</sup>

Swift heeded this plea for mercy and responded as nobly as any friend could:

I confess I did never imagine you were so deep in morals so that so many new and excellent rules could be produced so advantageously and agreeably in that science, from any one head. I confess in some few places I was forced to read twice. I believe I told you before what the Duke of Dorset said to me on that occasion, how a judge here, who knows you, told the Duke, that on the first reading of those Essays, he was much pleased, but found some lines a little dark; on the second, most of them cleared up; on the third, he had no doubt remaining, and then he admired the whole. My Lord Bolingbroke's attempt of reducing metaphysics to intelligible sense and usefulness, will be a glorious undertaking, and as I never knew him fail in anything he attempted,

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<sup>53</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 323: Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734.

<sup>54</sup> Loc. cit.

if he had the sole management, so I am confident he will succeed in this. <sup>55</sup>

This interest in philosophy never became an issue between them. There is little or no discussion of metaphysical problems in the letters. Pope was discreet enough not to bring the subject up until the publication of his work forced him to do so, and Swift was content to allow him and Bolingbroke their speculations as long as they did not trouble him with their findings. As far as speculative philosophy was concerned their friendship followed this pattern.

Nor was philosophical speculation a constant, permanent interest to Pope, one which could have interfered in the earlier, formative days of their friendship. It appears to have been a later interest which subsided soon after it reached its height:

I am almost at the end of my morals, as I have been long ago of my wit. My system is a short one, and my circle narrow. Imagination has no limits, and that is a sphere in which you may move on to eternity; but when one is confined to truth, or, to speak more like a human creature, to the appearances of truth, we soon find the shortness of our tether. Indeed, by the help of a metaphysical chain of ideas one may extend the circulation, go round and round for ever, without making any progress beyond the point to which Providence has pinned us; but this does not satisfy me, who would rather say a little to no purpose, than a great deal. Lord Bolingbroke <sup>56</sup> is voluminous, but he is voluminous only to destroy volumes.

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<sup>55</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 326: Swift to Pope, Nov. 1, 1734.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 329: Pope to Swift, December 19, 1734.

Although his interest subsided, it never disappeared. It reappeared again, in its original form, in 1736:

My understanding, such as it is, is extended rather than diminished: I see things more in the whole, more consistent, and more clearly deduced from, and related to each other. But what I gain on the side of philosophy I lose on the side of poetry. <sup>57</sup>

In his reply to each of these letters,<sup>58</sup> Swift made no reference whatsoever to philosophy, and the only references to the subject, as such, in the entire correspondence have been cited.

Like politics, speculative philosophy was not an interest they shared. Pope would have preferred Swift to abandon his political activities, and no doubt Swift would have been pleased if Pope had renounced philosophizing. However, their friendship was above these interests, and the mutual respect of each for the other's accomplishments in these rather questionable pursuits made it possible for their friendship to remain unimpaired by these differences. Then, too, philosophers, like politicians, are seldom in perfect agreement, and it might have been fortunate, in so far as their personal relationship was concerned, that these two activities did not enter into it.

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<sup>57</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 341: Pope to Swift, March 25, 1736.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 331: Swift to Pope, May 12, 1735, and p. 343: Swift to Pope, April 22, 1736.

Thus far our investigation has revealed the major aspects of their personal relationship. It was one of deep friendship characterized by a willingness on the part of the individuals involved to respect the personal likes and eccentricities of the other without compromising his own position. Thus, on the question of religion, an understanding which formed a very necessary part of their association was reached; the same is true of politics and philosophy. Their differences were effectively settled, to the benefit of their personal relationship, by the application of reason and common sense. It was a friendship in which taste had definitely triumphed.



## CHAPTER V

### DUNCIAD AND GULLIVER

On no level of their relationship is the peculiar similarity of these two men, in spite of all their differences, better illustrated than on the literary one. Of all their works none is more clearly the result of their friendship than Gulliver's Travels and the Dunciad, the two most unfriendly works in the English language. In this chapter we shall examine their relationship on its most significant and obvious level, literature.

The early acquaintance of Swift and Pope must have been confined principally to their mutual activities in the famous Scriblerus Club founded in 1713. Its members included Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Thomas Parnell, Dr. John Arbuthnot, Nicholas Rowe, John Gay, and, of course, Pope and Swift.<sup>1</sup> A meeting-place for Tories, yet literary diversion became quickly its primary purpose. It was Pope who originally conceived the idea of writing jointly the memoirs of the imaginary pedant, Martinus Scriblerus, but only he and Arbuthnot carried out the fragments of the original plan because of the dissolution of the Club with the fall of the Tories. Swift took it up again in the 1720's and made the Scriblerus Club and its purpose immortal as the germinal idea behind Gulliver's Travels.

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<sup>1</sup> Sherburn, op. cit., p. 72.

Pope's Dunciad had its beginnings in the Scriblerus Club too. In the joint satire originally planned he was to have handled pedantry in literature, Swift, in politics and society. Many years later, when Swift and Pope were discussing the compilation of their Miscellany together at Twickenham, Swift kept the original draft of the Dunciad from being thrown into the fire.<sup>2</sup> And there is Pope's terse phrase, "without you it had never been",<sup>3</sup> to remind us of Swift's place in its production.

Standing together, like their authors, these two great works of genius have brought upon themselves the condemnation and admiration of critics for over two hundred years. Monuments to misanthropy and hatred, they are equally monuments to genius and friendship. Whatever the opinion one may have of the authors, or the works, themselves, the literature of England would be immeasurably poorer without them. They stem directly from the personal relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift.

It will be the object of this chapter to reveal the part literature played in their association as it is shown by their letters. We have reserved this discussion to the last because it is the most obvious level of their relationship, and the one most susceptible to mis-interpretation if the personal friendship

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2 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., V, 212.

3 Ibid., VII, 138: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1728.

of the individuals involved has not been clearly defined. The letters will be examined for the information they contain about the effect of literature on their friendship, as well as its position in their association. The method and procedure will be the same as that adopted in the preceding chapters.

Swift's high opinion of Pope's genius and poetical ability in the earliest days of their acquaintance is very important as a foundation for their later friendship. Unquestionably Pope's abilities as a writer brought him to Swift's attention; his first recorded reference to Pope in the Journal to Stella was concerned with a literary subject, Windsor Forest.<sup>4</sup> Swift considered him to be "the best poet in England"<sup>5</sup> as early as 1713, and he was remarkably active in promoting the Iliad subscription. The first stages of their relationship, then, were literary, and the first preserved letter of the correspondence refers to literature, for, in it Pope remarks that he has completed the Rape of the Lock. Evidently, then, Swift knew about the poem as projected, and had undoubtedly discussed it with Pope. Later he wrote: "I saw the Key to the Lock but yesterday: I think you have changed it a good deal, to adapt it to the present times."<sup>6</sup> These first letters reveal that literature was an integral part of the friendship which was just taking shape.

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4 Supra, p. 31.

5 Supra, p. 32.

6 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

That much of their time together during the first year and one-half they knew each other in London must have been expended in all sorts of literary activity seems obvious, and, even without Gulliver's Travels and the Dunciad, one can cite the letters as evidence of the great amount of time spent in the Scriblerus Club.

. . . your only design is to attend at full leisure to the life and adventures of Scriblerus. This, indeed, must be granted of greater importance than all the rest, and I wish I could promise so well of you. The top of my own ambition is to contribute to that great work, and I shall translate Homer by and by.<sup>7</sup>

Nor was this the extent of their mutual literary endeavors at this time. In his first letter Pope reminded Swift that, among other things, he was grateful to him because he "put me upon making poems that he might alter them, etc."<sup>8</sup>

Pope's Iliad came out about a year after Swift took up residence in Ireland, and, since we have mentioned his activities as its promoter, we should note that he was extremely pleased with the work as a whole, and felt that it was much better than even he had expected. His criticism is sincere, and he is sure enough of their friendship, at least on literary matters, to mention "all the faults"<sup>9</sup> he can find:

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<sup>7</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 7: Pope to Swift, June 18, 1714.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 3: Pope to Swift, Dec. 8, 1713.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

I borrowed your Homer from the Bishop -- mine is not yet landed -- and read it out in two evenings. If it pleases others as well as me, you have got your end in profit and reputation; yet I am angry at some bad lines and triplets, and pray in your next do not let me have so many unjustifiable rhymes to war and gods [*italics in original.*] I tell you all the faults I know, only in one or two places you are a little obscure; but I expected you to be so in one or two and twenty . . . Your notes are perfectly good, and so are your preface and essay. <sup>10</sup>

He admired the work, but he lamented the condition of a world which forced Pope to employ his genius in such pursuits. When he heard of Pope's projected translation of the Odyssey, he wrote:

Our Lord Oxford used to curse the occasions that put you on translations, and, if he and the Queen had lived, you should have entirely followed your own genius, built and planted much, and writ only when you had a mind. <sup>11</sup>

In his answer <sup>12</sup>Pope stated that he was through with translation, which "exceedingly pleased" <sup>13</sup>Swift. Nevertheless, in the same letter, he paid high compliments to Pope's abilities:

I did not know your Odyssey was finished, being yet in the country, which I shall leave in three days. I shall thank you kindly for the present, but shall like it three-fourths the less, from the mixture of another hand; [Pope had employed two assistants in this translation] however, I am glad you saved yourself so much drudgery . . . <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 9: Swift to Pope, June 28, 1715.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 48: Swift to Pope, July 19, 1725.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 50: Pope to Swift, Sept. 14, 1725.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725.

<sup>14</sup> Loc. cit.

Thus, Swift sympathized with Pope's position, aided him as much as possible, and was generous in his appreciation of works they both judged to be of secondary importance.

Nor was his opinion of Pope's literary excellences confined to the fields of poetry and translation. We have a whole series of letters in which he again and again evidences his complete trust and faith in Pope's critical powers. "I am mustering," he wrote, "as I told you, all the little things in verse that I think may be safely printed, but I give you despotic power to tear as many as you please."<sup>15</sup> He reiterated this sentiment a few months later:

Since you have received those verses I most earnestly entreat you to burn those which you do not approve, and in those few where you may not dislike some parts, blot out the rest, and sometimes, though it be against the laziness of your nature, be so kind as to make a few corrections, if the matter will bear them.<sup>16</sup>

He agreed whole-heartedly with the method Pope had proposed for their publication,<sup>17</sup> and, five years later, in 1731, he forwarded more material for a further volume of the Miscellany. He did so "provided you will be as severe a judge as becomes so dear a friend."<sup>18</sup>

These passages are all concerned with the material which

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<sup>15</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 81: Swift to Pope, Oct. 15, 1726.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 93: Swift to Pope, Dec. 5, 1726.

<sup>17</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 211: Swift to Pope, Jan. 15, 1731.

Swift sent to Pope for publication in their Miscellany, and although it appears that Swift considered his own poetry to be "nothing but trifles,"<sup>19</sup> it must be remembered that he wrote this to the man whom he considered to be the greatest poet of his time. As far as poetry is concerned, it is obvious from the letters that Swift was willing to acknowledge Pope's superiority. In addition, he attested to his critical abilities early in the correspondence,<sup>20</sup> and he showed this confidence again when Gay died.<sup>21</sup> From the letters we may judge that Swift, without doubt, considered Pope to be a literary master.

His admiration of his friend's abilities never diminished. By June, 1728, Swift had read an imperfect Irish edition of the Dunciad,<sup>22</sup> and his praise was as high as his criticism was careful:

The notes I could wish to be very large, in what related to the persons concerned . . . I would have the names of those scribblers printed indexically at the beginning or end of the poem, with an account of their works for the reader to refer to. I would have all the parodies, as they are called, referred to the author they imitate . . . After twenty times reading the whole I never in my opinion saw so much good satire, or more good sense, in so many lines . . .<sup>23</sup>

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19 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 364: Swift to Pope, August 8, 1738.

20 Ibid., p. 17: Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722.

21 Supra, p. 25-26.

22 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 131: Swift to Pope, June 1, 1728.

23 Ibid., p. 134: Swift to Pope, July 16, 1728.

But this was a bad copy of a garbled edition published as a subterfuge by Pope in London in May;<sup>24</sup> it did not include the inscription or the notes. The final or second edition did not appear until a year later, and, at the time of writing the above letter, Swift had not yet received Pope's letter of June twenty-eighth:

The Dunciad is going to be printed in all pomp, with the inscription, which makes me proudest. It will be attended by Proeme, Prolegomena, Testimonia Scriptorum, Index Authorum and Notes Variorum. [*italics in original*] As to the latter I desire you to read over the text, and make a few in any way you like best; whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting of trivial writers; or humorous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical, of persons, places, times; or explanatory; or collecting the parallel passages of the ancients.<sup>25</sup>

Pope's letter anticipated the only objections Swift had, and when he was finally able to read the real poem he pronounced his approval in characteristic fashion:

You were so careful of sending me the Dunciad, that I have received five of them, and pleased four friends. I am one of everybody who approve every part of it, text and comment; but am one abstracted from everybody, in the happiness of being recorded your friend, while wit, and humor, and politeness shall have any memorial among us.<sup>26</sup>

As far as the correspondence is concerned, there can be no doubt of Swift's opinion of Pope's literary abilities and

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24 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., V, 18.

25 Ibid., VII, 133: Pope to Swift, June 28, 1728.

26 Ibid., p. 163: Swift to Pope, Oct. 31, 1729.



position. In 1732 he promised to send more material for another Miscellany,<sup>27</sup> and, in 1733, he praised Pope's genius while he made certain corrections in the epitaph Pope had written for the tomb of Gay.<sup>28</sup> When Pope accused him of not recognizing him as the anonymous author of the Essay on Man, he replied indignantly that he knew Pope's poetry so well that he "would lay any odds that I would never fail to discover you in six lines, unless you had a mind to write below or beside yourself on purpose."<sup>29</sup> Swift states his opinion frankly. One feels that he would have agreed completely with Bolingbroke when the latter wrote to him of his own opinion of Pope's poetical abilities:

. . . my judgement, who always thought that, universal as his [Pope's] talents are, this eminently and peculiarly his, above all writers I know, living or dead; I do not except Horace.<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting to note that Swift regarded Pope's moral didacticism as his greatest literary excellence. This was quite natural for Swift who looked upon all noble actions as being elicited by the evils in the world;<sup>31</sup> he would have shuddered at

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27 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 270: Swift to Pope, June 12, 1732.

28 Ibid., p. 299: Swift to Pope, March 31, 1733.

29 Ibid., p. 326: Swift to Pope, Nov. 1, 1734.

30 Ball, op. cit., IV, 109: Bolingbroke to Swift, Nov. 19, 1729.

31 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 51: Swift to Pope, Sept. 29, 1725.

a work of art that lacked conscious didacticism.<sup>32</sup> We, too, might be able the better to appreciate the work of Alexander Pope if we could feel, with Swift, that his Epistles on morality were the most "useful" of all his writings, and that if they did not "mend so profligate a world as ours, posterity will enjoy the benefit."<sup>33</sup> We are not "amazed to see you Pope exhaust the whole science of morality in so masterly a manner."<sup>34</sup> His high opinion of Pope's abilities in this regard knew no restraint:

I am often wondering how you come to excel all mortals on the subject of morality, even in the poetical way, and should have wondered more, if nature and education had not made you a professor of it from your infancy.<sup>35</sup>

Such passages certainly contributed a great deal to their mutual relationship. This was not praise from a member of a flattering coterie; the man who wrote these passages had written the Battle of the Books, the Tale of a Tub, the Drapier Letters, Gulliver's Travels, and he had been editor of the Examiner. His good opinion was invaluable, and his estimate of Pope's abilities as a writer, shared by few critics, could not have helped but add

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<sup>32</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 299: Swift to Pope, March 31, 1733.

Cf. Quintana, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 347: Swift to Pope, Dec. 2, 1736.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 343: Swift to Pope, April 22, 1736.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 357: Swift to Pope, May 31, 1737.

to the firmness of their friendship:

. . . the crowd do not encumber you, who, like the orator or preacher, stand aloft, and are seen above the rest, more than the whole assembly below. . . .<sup>36</sup>

Pope had a very high opinion of Swift's literary excellences also, as is peculiarly evidenced in those letters which deal with the Dunciad. He sent him the following inscription which finally appeared in the second edition of the poem:

And it grieves me to the soul that I cannot send you my chef d'oeuvre, the poem of Dulness, which, after I am dead and gone, will be printed with a large commentary, and letters on the back, Pope's Dulness. I send you, however, what most nearly relates to yourself, the inscription to it, which you must consider, re-consider, criticize, hyper-criticize, and consult about with Sheridan, Delaney and all the other litterati of the kingdom -- I mean, to render it less unworthy of you.

#### INCIPIT PROPOSITO

Books and the man I sing., &c.

#### INSCRIPTIO

And thou! whose sense, whose humour, and whose rage,  
At once can teach, delight, and lash the age,  
Whether thou choose Cervantes serious air,  
Or laugh and shake in Rab'lais' easy chair,  
Praise courts, and monarchs, or extol mankind,  
Or thy grieved country's copper chains unbind;  
Attend whatever title please thine ear,  
Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver.  
From thy Boetia, lo! The fog retires,  
Yet grieve thou not at what our Isle acquires;  
Here dulness reigns, with mighty wings outspread,<sup>37</sup>  
And brings the true Saturnian age of lead, etc.

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<sup>36</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 357: Swift to Pope, May 31, 1737.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 109: Pope to Swift, January, 1728.

And in the following October Pope acknowledged his debt to Swift in the Dunciad in unequivocal terms:

The inscription to the Dunciad is now printed, and inserted in the poem. Do you care I should say anything further how much that poem is yours, since certainly without you, it had never been?<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Pope speaks for both himself and Swift in his attack on the Dunces. Swift had always deplored the lack of wit and taste in the world,<sup>39</sup> particularly after the fall of the Tories, and we are all aware of the proposition to which the members of the Scriblerus Club dedicated themselves. Pope told Swift that his principal aim in the entire work was "to perpetuate the friendship between us, and to show that the friends or enemies of one were the friends or enemies of the other."<sup>40</sup> Although this noble purpose might seem incongruous to us, Pope further demonstrated his high opinion of Swift's literary abilities by saying:

If in any particular, anything be stated or mentioned in a different manner from what you like, pray tell me freely, that the new edition now coming out may have it rectified.<sup>41</sup>

In this same letter he goes out of his way to say that Swift is really the greater satirist, and he sustained this opinion

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<sup>38</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 138: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1728.

<sup>39</sup> Supra, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 158: Pope to Swift, Oct. 9, 1729.

<sup>41</sup> Loc. cit.

until the end:

I have not the courage, however, to be such a satirist as you, but I would be as much, or more, a philosopher. You call your satires libels; I would rather call my satires, epistles. They will consist more of morality than of wit, and grow graver, which you will call duller. <sup>42</sup>

He was "prodigiously pleased" <sup>43</sup> with their Miscellany, and he was quite certain that he, too, would be able to recognize the real Swift in writing anywhere. <sup>44</sup> His praise of Swift's work is as high as Swift's had been of his: "Yours [Swift's works] are beauties, that can never be too finely dressed; for they will ever be young." <sup>45</sup> As the following passage indicates, he maintained this attitude constantly: "Nothing of you can die, nothing of you can decay, . . . or suffer . . . be obscured or locked up from esteem and admiration." <sup>46</sup> He regarded Swift as one of the greatest writers of his time.

Even before he had seen Gulliver's Travels he was certain of its moral purpose, certain of Swift's ability to handle the subject, and, in discussing their future life together in the next world, he pictured Swift as an avenging angel of wrath breaking the "vial of his indignation over the heads of the

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<sup>42</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 305: Pope to Swift, April 20, 1733.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 94: Pope to Swift, Feb. 18, 1727.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 184: Pope to Swift, March 4, 1730.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 323: Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 367: Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1738.

wretched, pitiful creatures of this world."<sup>47</sup> When the work appeared he was delighted with it:

About ten days ago a book was published here of the travels of one Gulliver, which has been the conversation of the whole town ever since: The whole impression sold in a week, and nothing is more diverting than to here the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author; but I am told the bookseller declares, he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet-council to the nursery. The politicians to a man agree, that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire on general societies of men is too severe. Not but we now and then meet with people of greater perspicuity, who are in search for particular applications on every leaf; and it is highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design . . . Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of a book you have never seen, and which has not yet reached Ireland. If it has not I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend it to your reading, and that you will order me to send it to you. But it will be much better to come over yourself, and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentaries, to explain the difficult passages to you. <sup>48</sup>

Pope had, of course, arranged the publication himself, but he pretended not to know the author so that he could bestow some very clever praise upon his friend's work. Swift enjoyed the praise and continued the pose, pretending not to know the meaning of the book or the identity of its author. He completed his discussion of his Irish friends' opinions of the work in a manner which rivalled all the wit of Pope's previous letter: "A bishop

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<sup>47</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 56: Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 88: Pope to Swift, Nov. 17, 1726.

here said the book was full of improbable lies, and for his part, he hardly believed a word of it; and so much for Gulliver."<sup>49</sup>

So much for Gulliver and the Dunciad. The letters abound with literary information -- in them we see comments on the major works of both writers, projected works, theories, like the necessity of didacticism, of art and aesthetics, suggestions like the one from Swift to Pope to Gay<sup>50</sup> which resulted in the Beggar's Opera, and other valuable, interesting information of a literary nature. Most of this material has been appropriated by the critics and biographers of both men. Thus, we restricted our investigation to literature and their relationship.

It is obvious from their letters that each man considered the other to be a great author whose work would live forever, and, although they frequently mentioned that they were not concerned with fame, they almost as frequently comforted each other with the thought that posterity would recognize their greatness. Literature, and particularly their own individual activities and eminence as writers, contributed very heavily to, and became an integral part of, their personal relationship.

Swift recognized Pope's genius and was proud of his

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49 Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 91: Swift to Pope, Nov. 27, 1726.

50 Ibid., p. 14: Swift to Pope, August 30, 1716.

friend's character and accomplishments. But one of his jokes, uttered as a compliment, contained more prophecy than wit: "Give me a shilling, and I will ensure you, that posterity shall never know you had one single enemy, excepting those whose memory you have preserved."<sup>51</sup> Nor was Pope less a prophet. He unwittingly characterized the greater number of Swift's critics for two hundred years to come when he wrote: "We your true acquaintances will look upon you as a good man, and love you; others will look upon you as a wit, and hate you."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 307: Swift to Pope, May 1, 1733.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 65: Pope to Swift, Dec. 14, 1725.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

For a proper understanding of the importance and place of the Swift-Pope correspondence it was necessary to place these letters in the history of letter-writing, and to comprehend the nature of the familiar letter with its curious development in the eighteenth century. For these letters stand, not only as a monument to the relationship of their writers, but as a fine example of a literary form at its height. However, this very excellence raised the question of the sincerity of the content of these letters, because of the essential difference between letters as letters, and letters as mere literary products. The letters of Pope, written in a tightly phrased, seemingly artificial language, were especially subject to this problem, one which was further complicated by Pope's unhappy habit of revising his letters before their publication. Indeed, the subtle mystery which pervades the release of this particular correspondence, the part played not only by Pope but also by Swift in their publication, had to be solved before the examination of the letters could proceed.

Yet, problems, mysteries, and difficulties admitted, these two men did write to each other for more than twenty-seven years. Some sort of close relation did exist between them. This is an inescapable fact which makes a definite statement

of the nature of their association absolutely essential to a complete understanding of either man's character and work.

Therefore, it was shown that neither writer could have been unconscious of the public value of his letters, and that it is impossible to pass judgement on the sincerity or the insincerity of their feelings, as they are expressed in the letters, from the stand-point of style alone. Further, the facts and half-facts surrounding the publication of the letters themselves clearly show that few major alterations could have been made by either Swift or Pope when these letters were first released, and that the text of the letters, as we have them, must be accepted. With this definite starting place in mind, then, with an understanding of the problems involved, and a clear idea of the nature of the material available, the value of the investigation was established and its purpose defined. The problem was to define the nature and extent of the personal relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift as it is revealed in their mutual correspondence.

The method of the thesis was purposely scientific. The opening chapter was devoted to a statement of the problem and a solution of the preliminary difficulties. Then the process of induction, of collecting the facts of the relationship, was begun. All the trivial, all the major activities of the friendship which could be gleaned from the letters was presented next. Nor was this interest only scientific; its further object was,

in fact, threefold: (1) the examination of all the particular, measurable aspects of their relationship would show the friendship in action, and allow us to determine its limits. (2) It would anticipate and dispose of any objections which could be raised later in the discussion of the reconciliation of the more difficult aspects of their association like religion, politics, and speculative philosophy. Only after any possibility of material gain for either man had been eliminated could these problems be examined accurately. (3) With the particulars of the relationship disposed of, it would be possible to examine the friendship itself and its more universal aspects without confusion.

Accordingly, the letters were examined under the primary aspect of what each derived from his association with the other. Both Swift and Pope were men of taste and wit, leaders in the world of fashion. Yet, they were separated by years, place, and civil discrimination in such a manner that neither could have gained any practical, measurable benefits by being ranked as the friend of the other. The "Silver Cups Incident" and the "Stella Affair" revealed an essential characteristic of their relationship and prepared for the later presentation of their regard and respect for the personal idiosyncrasies of the other. Their conduct here foreshadowed their action in regard to their differences in politics, religion, and philosophy. In addition, it showed us that the relationship did not include Stella,

however friendly and personal it was. More important, the "Silver Cups Incident" was the only disagreement the letters reveal, and its solution, on terms of consideration and friendship, is significant. This was friendship in action.

The nature of the friendship was, of course, implicit in this discussion. To make it explicit, in the words of the letters themselves, was the next consideration. For, this is a study of the letters, and the letters, themselves, are the highest authority in our examination. Since any objection to their sincerity on the grounds of style or personal gain had already been obviated, it was only necessary to present the statements of each in regard to their friendship and each other, and to make the necessary conclusions. Their relationship consisted chiefly of a deep admiration of the personal character of the other, limited in each only by his capacity for friendship. It was a real friendship in every meaning of the word.

But between friends one expects to find similarities, and, in two such notoriously "unfriendly" men as Swift and Pope, the immediate similarity which strikes one is an outlook of misanthropy. The seeming incongruity of their literary reputations and the facts revealed by the letters demanded an explanation, and this curious outlook, so opposed to friendship itself, and so much a part of their personal relationship, was examined in detail. Strange as it may seem, their relationship was founded as much upon misanthropy as anything else, and it

was discussed in the same place as the kindlier subject of the goodness of their friendship. The letters reveal that this outlook was a common one necessitated by personal constitution and the fashion of the time, and that it became an integral part of their relationship.

In addition to the nature of their relationship, the letters reveal the limits this friendship could reach. It transcended differences in political position, religion, and philosophy, and the discussion of these aspects of their association presented these men in an attitude seldom, if ever, portrayed by their biographers. The personal relationship of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift was, properly speaking, defined.

However, the most obvious and most confused aspect of their relationship, the literary one, remained to be shown. Here indeed were the forces of friendship in action; here indeed were their similarities manifested. Yet, the relationship and its effect on literature is seldom emphasized. Nevertheless, the greatest work of each man, the Dunciad and Gulliver's Travels, is a direct product of their friendship, and the importance of their relationship will be evidenced by them as long as English literature is studied and read.

The letters reveal that, as Swift grew older, and the number of his friends decreased, his affection and love for Pope increased until the time, early in 1736, when he wrote:

"You are not only the best, but the only friend I have left."<sup>1</sup>  
There can be little doubt that from 1737 until his death Jonathan Swift loved Alexander Pope better than anyone else in the world.

The growth of intimacy which is so marked in the letters of Swift is, in general, not so noticeable in those of Pope. There is little significant change in tone and style after the visits of 1726-1727, although the letters are often less formal than those written before that time. His expressed feelings parallel those of Swift, but they lack the warmth and simplicity the style of Swift evokes. Pope, always "correct", hinders our judgement here.

The correspondence and our study of it would seem to indicate that, however close their relationship was, it seldom ceased to be a formal one, regulated by the standards of the day. At the time of their first meeting Swift was thirty-six years of age and Pope, twenty-five. They were not friends from their youth, and, in all, could not have spent more than two years of their lives in the same country after their meeting. If all the days they saw each other could be added together, the total would undoubtedly be little more than a few months taken out of their lifetimes.

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<sup>1</sup> Elwin-Courthope, op. cit., VII, 339: Swift to Pope, Feb. 9, 1736.

In conclusion, then, the letters of Pope and Swift reveal that they were very close friends, bound together by mutual affection and esteem against a world of pedantry, ignorance, and Dunces. They loved each other as much as each was able and the age in which they lived would allow. They neither were, nor considered themselves to be, an eighteenth century counterpart of Damon and Pythias.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

### FRIENDS AND ENEMIES MENTIONED IN THE LETTERS

The Swift-Pope correspondence abounds with references to friends, enemies, and acquaintances. In Chapter III of the thesis it was shown that, in general, the friends or enemies of Swift were the friends or enemies of Pope, and we were able to derive certain conclusions about their personal relationship because of that fact. The authority for this conclusion may be readily seen from the chart below which indicates the letters in which the names of their mutual friends and enemies find mention.

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Friends</u>	<u>Enemies</u>
Pope to Swift, June 20, 1716	Ford	-----
Swift to Pope, Aug. 30, 1716	-----	Curll, Gildon, Burnet, Black- more
Swift to Pope, Jan. 10, 1722	Addison, Rowe	-----
Pope to Swift, August , 1723	Congreve, Steele	-----
Swift to Pope, Sept. 20, 1723	Harcourt, Harley	-----
Swift to Pope, July 19, 1725	Bolingbroke, Peterborough	-----
Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725	Stopford	-----
Swift to Pope, Nov. 26, 1725	Gay, Arbuthnot,	Hopkins, Cibber,
Pope to Swift, Dec. 14, 1725	Berkeley, Disney,	Sternhold,
Pope to Swift, Nov. 16, 1726	Wyndham, Bathurst	Phillips
Pope to Swift, Nov. 28, 1729	Jervas	Walpole
Swift to Pope, July 8, 1733	Lewis	-----
Pope to Swift, Jan. 6, 1734	-----	The Pulteneys
Pope to Swift, Sept. 15, 1734	Atterbury, Dr.	-----
Pope to Swift, Sept., 1735	Garth, the Craggs,	-----
Pope to Swift, Oct. 12, 1738	Mr. Hutchison	-----
Swift to Pope, May 10, 1739	Southern	-----
	-----	Doddington
	-----	The Pilkingtons
	Hughes, Rundle	-----
	Lyttleton	-----
	Masham	-----

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John F. Abel has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

April 24, 1949  
Date

Lois E. A. Burns  
Signature of Adviser